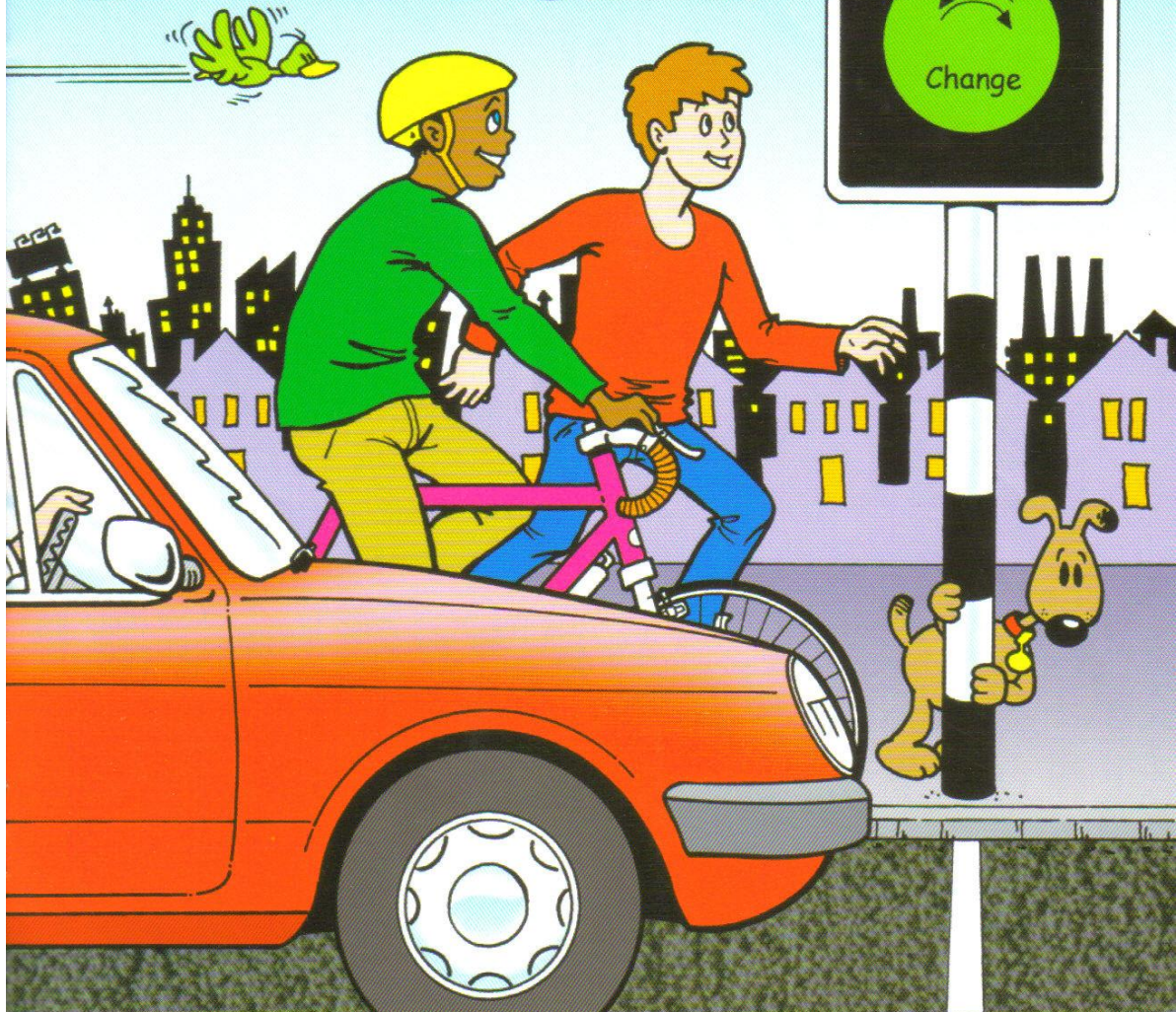


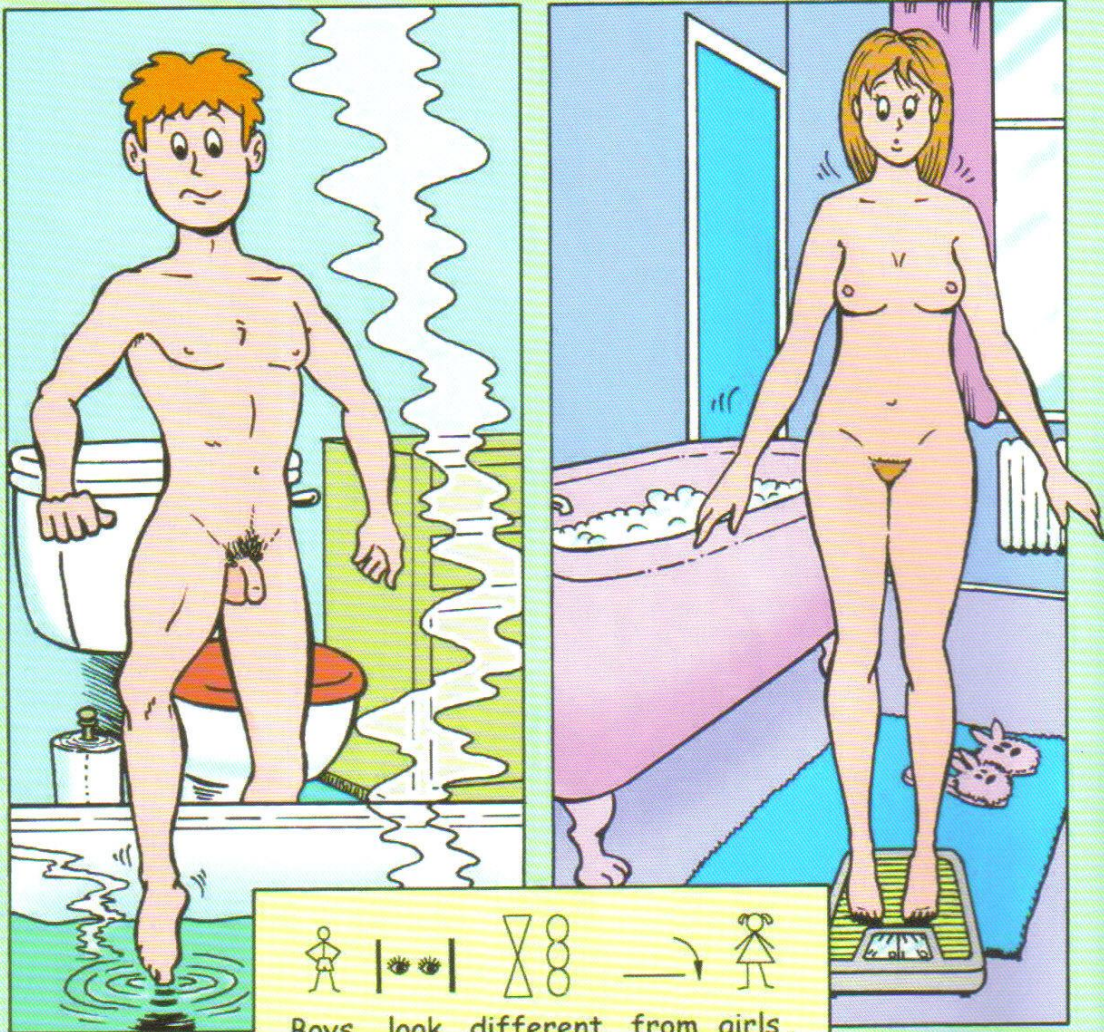
**BOYZ
WILL BE
BOYZ
COMICS**

READY- STEADY- CHANGE!



Ready, Steady, Change! is a comic book for boys who have learning disabilities. It is designed to take them, their parents and carers through puberty and some of the issues and concerns that may be experienced.

BASIC GENDER DIFFERENCES



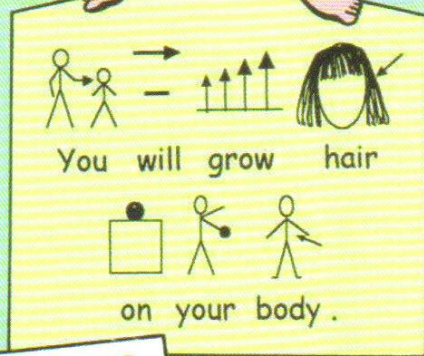
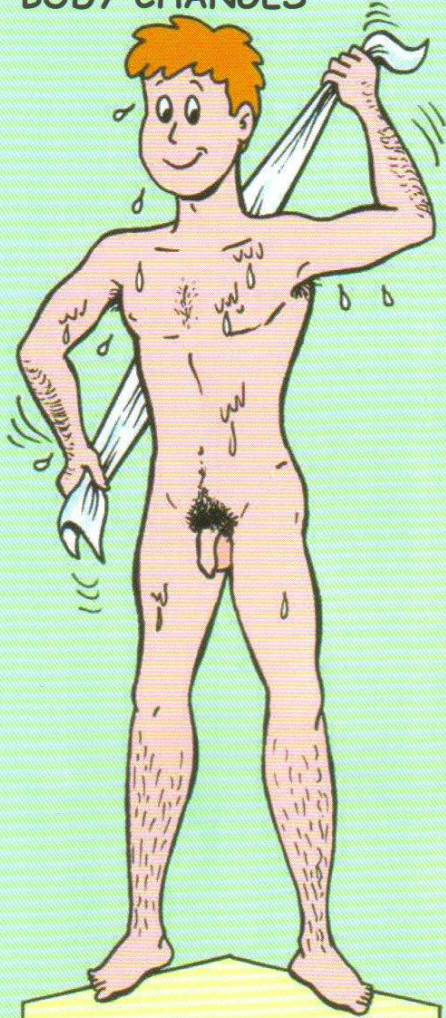
PARENTS:

Puberty is a time of change for boys and girls, both physically and emotionally. These changes can begin to occur from around the age of 10, until the late teens. Every person is different. When these changes occur they will be at a time that is right for that person.

Puberty begins when the brain sends out chemical signals called hormones. Hormones cause both physical and emotional changes within the body. In boys, these hormones signal the testicles to start production of another hormone called testosterone. This hormone makes the penis and testicles grow and brings about other changes such as body hair.

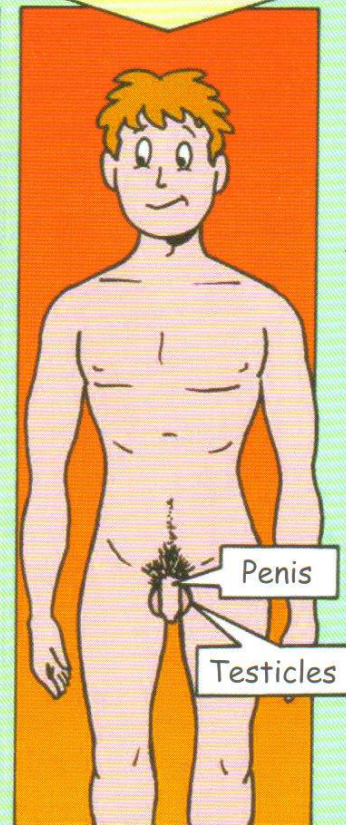
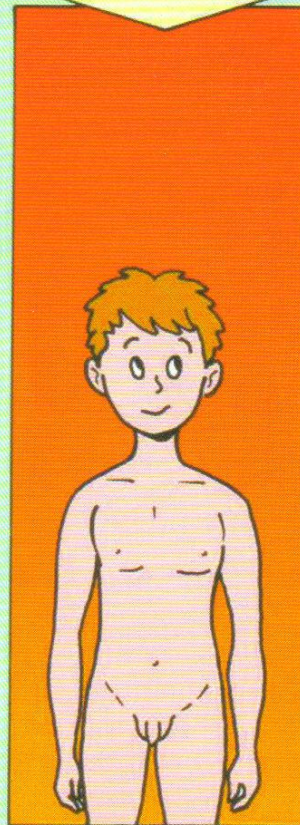
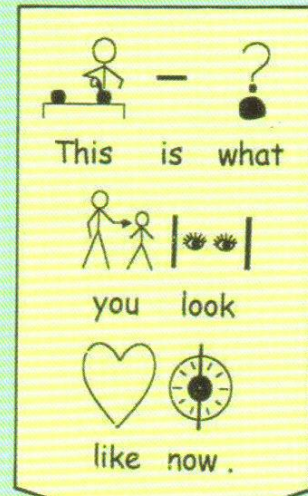
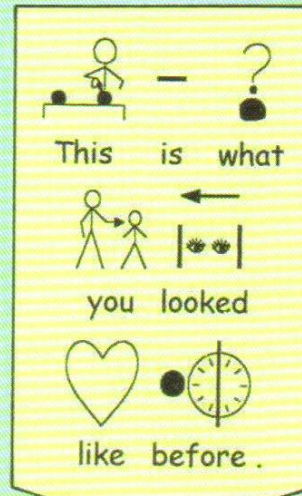
Oestrogen is the name of the hormone that causes changes in girls and stimulates breast development and causes the vagina and the uterus (womb) to mature.

BODY CHANGES

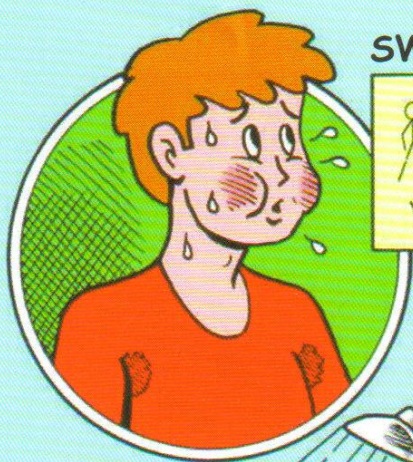


PARENTS:

GENITAL GROWTH



The hormone testosterone that causes the penis and testicles to grow, also stimulates the production of sperm, a sign that a young man may be fertile. In addition, growth of body hair is stimulated. This is typically seen on the face, pubic area and legs and can also occur on the abdomen, chest, buttocks and back. Testosterone is also responsible for the growth spurt that causes boys to become taller, the voice becoming deeper and the development of a more muscular shape.

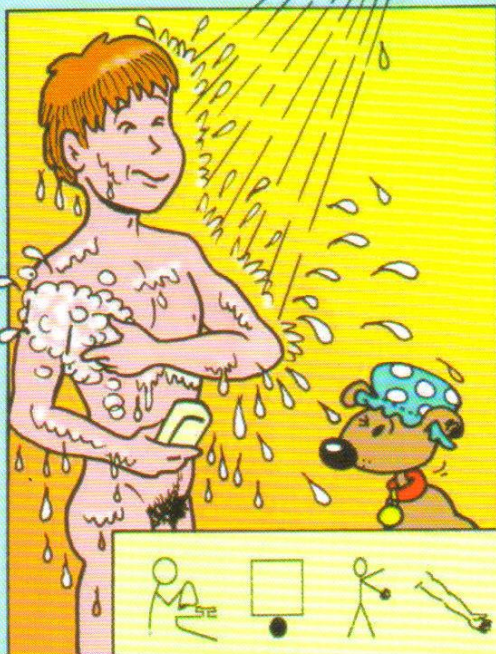


SWEATING

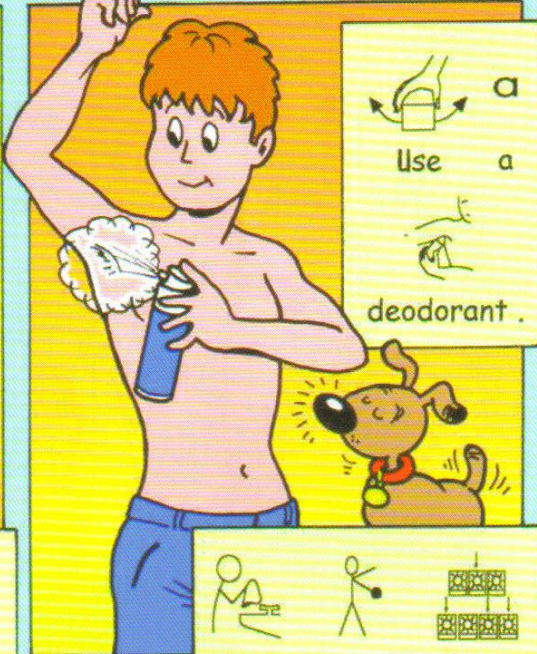
You will sweat more.



Sweating could make you smell.



Wash under your arms



Use a deodorant.

Wash yourself often.

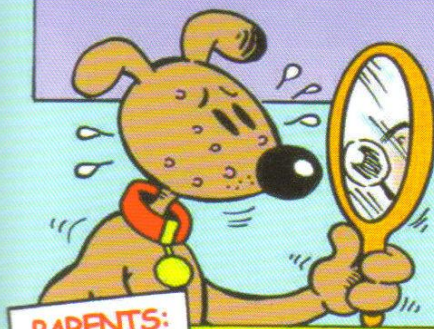
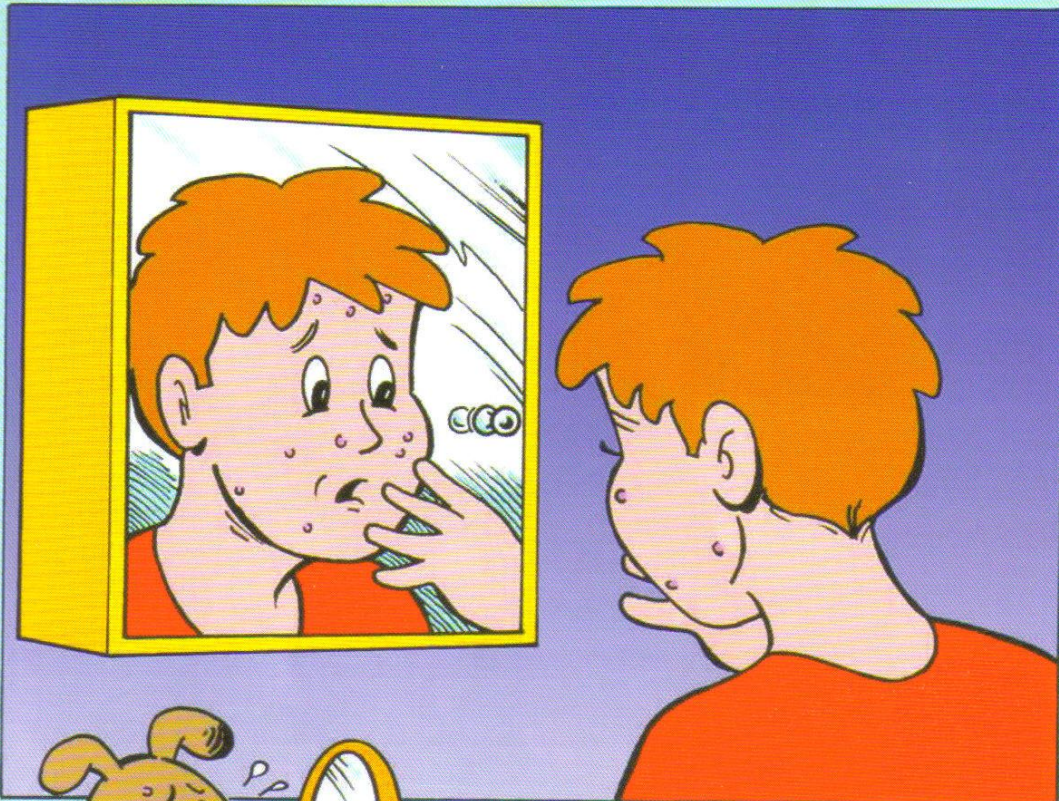
PARENTS:

Hygiene is especially important as your son gets older. He *will* sweat, so a shower, a bath or washing underneath his arms will be necessary on a daily basis. In addition, it is important that he changes his pants and socks every day, as these may cause him to smell. His hair may also become greasy and needs to be washed regularly.

Genital hygiene is also significant. A whitish/yellowish substance called smegma can build up underneath your son's foreskin and can become very smelly if left, so it is important that you encourage washing in this area too.

Some boys do have their foreskin (the piece of skin that covers the end of the penis) removed for medical or cultural reasons. This does not affect use of the penis in any way.

SPOTS

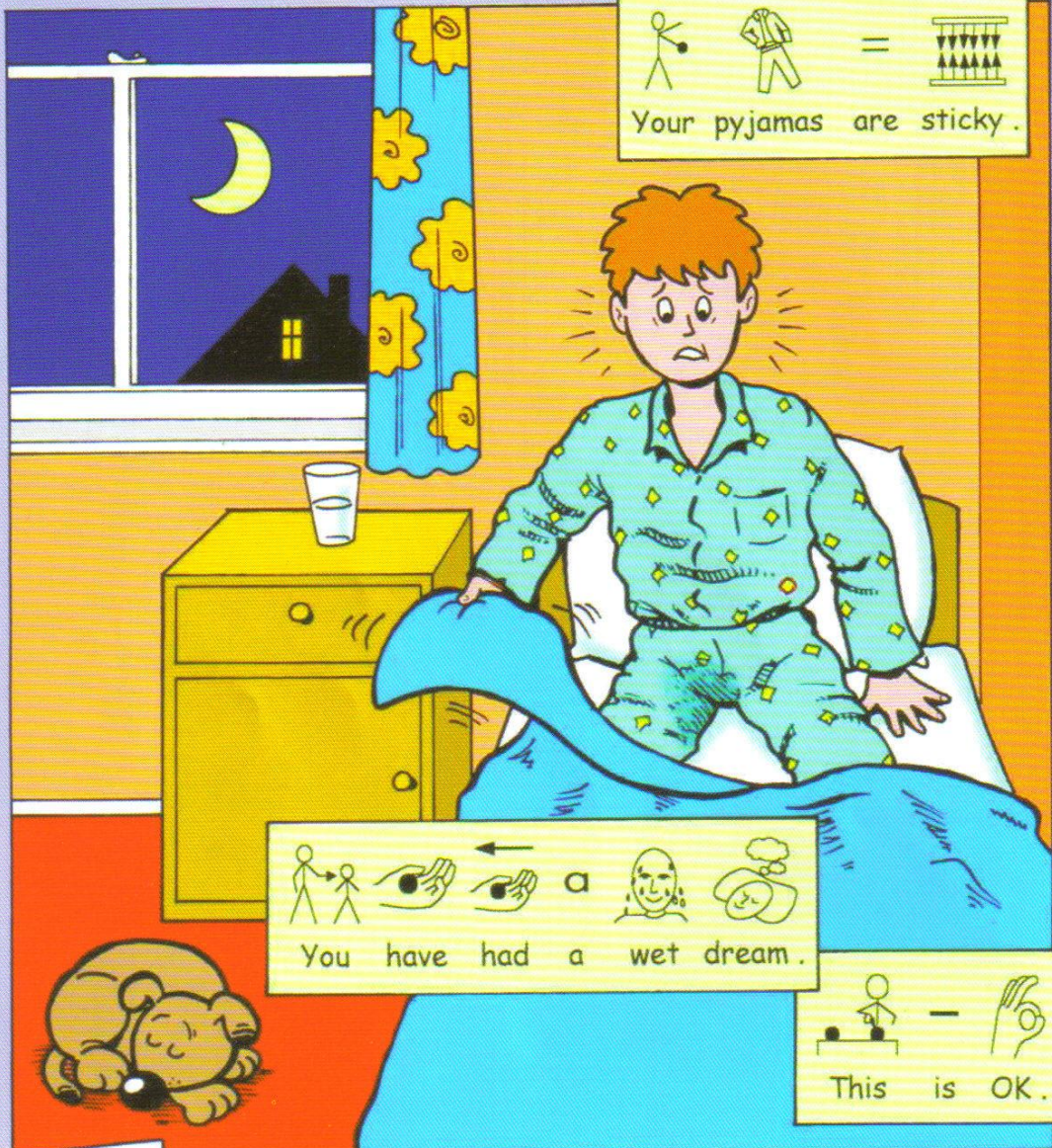



You could get spots on your face.

PARENTS:


A lot of boys get spots during puberty. They may occur on the face, neck, back and chest. Spots are caused by inflammation of small oil glands that surround the hairs in these areas. The inflammation is triggered by testosterone, the hormone that causes other body changes in boys, during puberty. Most spots tend to go away in time. Sometimes however, the oily glands can be over-stimulated to form acne. This is a condition that can last for much longer, sometimes until people are in their twenties. If your son has a lot of spots that don't clear up, he may have developed acne. A doctor will be able to offer treatment for this. Advice on suitable treatment for spots can be obtained from a pharmacist. A mild soap or cleanser is best used to clean areas affected by spots, as other soaps can aggravate the condition. Whilst there is no scientific evidence to support the theory that fatty foods or chocolate can cause spots or acne, you may notice that eating certain foods may cause the spots to increase, so it is best to avoid these. Drinking lots of water and eating a healthy diet will also benefit your son's overall health.

WET DREAMS

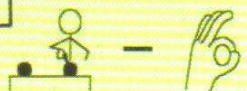




 Your pyjamas are sticky.



 You have had a wet dream.

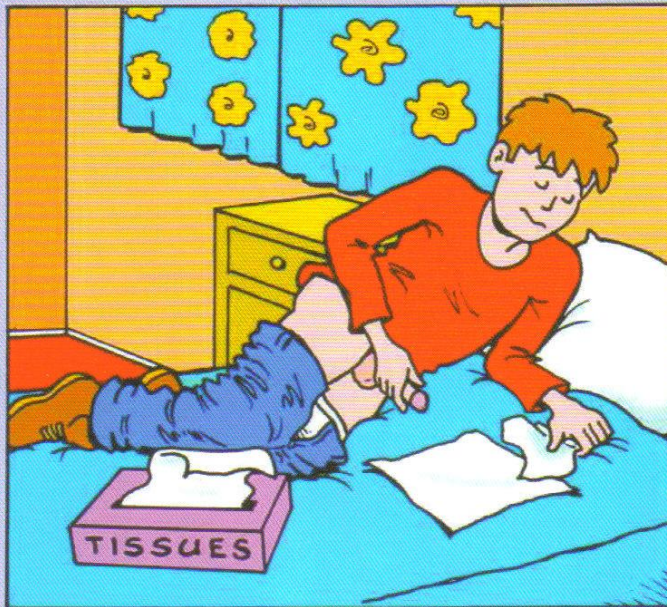


 This is OK.

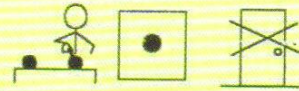
PARENTS:

The hormone testosterone causes the production of sperm and semen (the fluid which carries the sperm) in the testicles. Testosterone also causes the penis to get larger during puberty. Sometimes the penis becomes erect and this can occur because a young man is sexually aroused, or it can happen sometimes for no apparent reason at all. This is especially common during puberty and can happen quite regularly. Spontaneous erections are again, due to testosterone. As your son gets older spontaneous erections will occur less frequently. Sometimes semen is released at night; this is called a wet dream - the body's way of making sure that the testicles are working correctly. Very often a wet dream can occur without a young man being aware that it has happened.

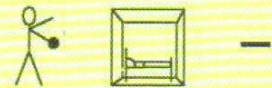
MASTURBATION



You need to do



this in private.



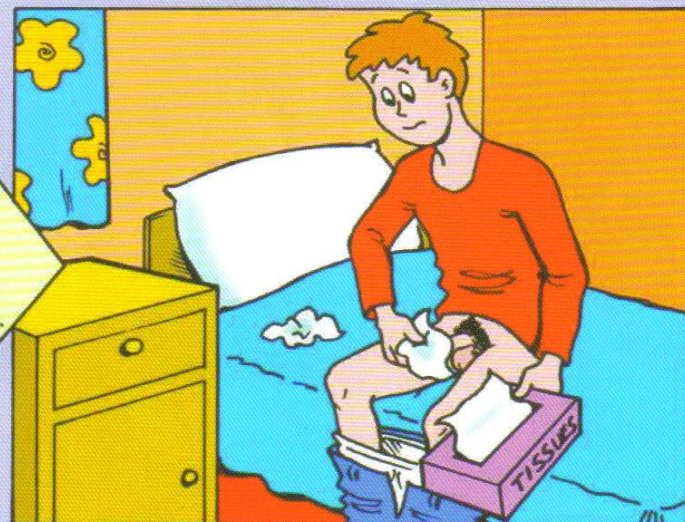
Your bedroom is



a good place.



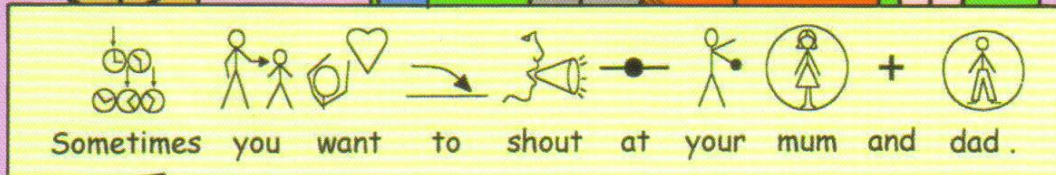
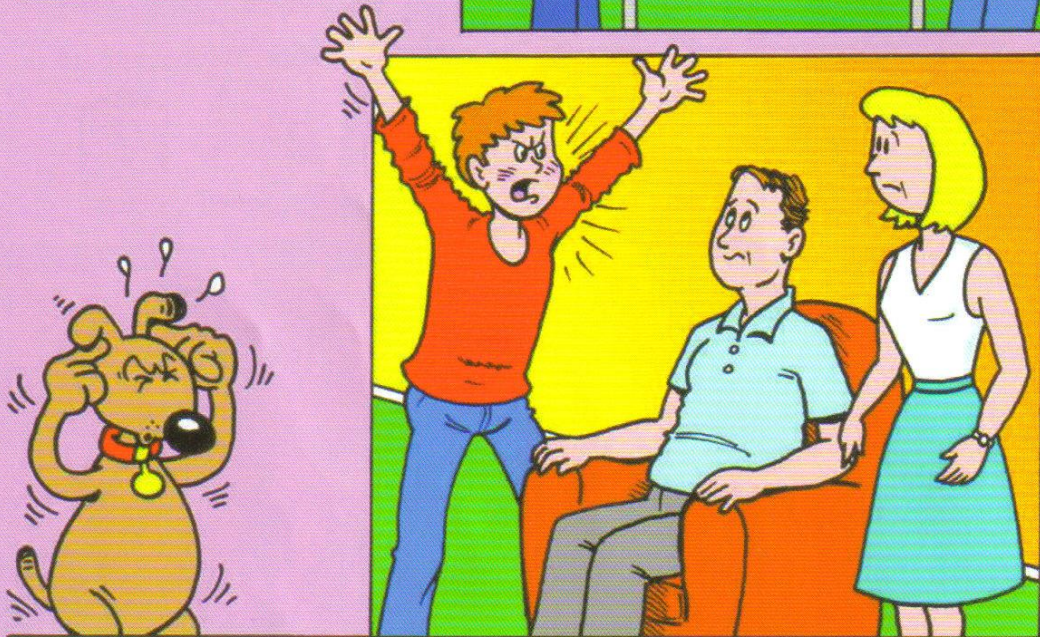
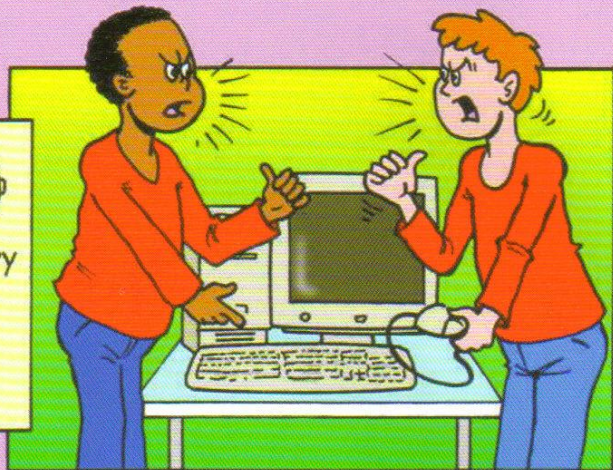
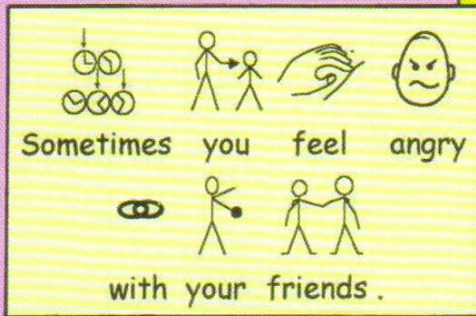
You wipe yourself.



PARENTS:

During puberty, people of both sexes begin to experience sexual feelings. Many people express these feelings by touching their own genitals. This is called masturbation. Boys begin to masturbate during puberty. This is a private and personal activity; a natural and safe way to release semen and to experience sexual pleasure. Contrary to some popular beliefs, masturbation does not cause any harm. When and if your son commences this, do not get angry with him if he begins to masturbate in an inappropriate place or situation. Talk to him about privacy and encourage him to go to a private place, such as his bedroom or wherever is appropriate to your family environment. Provide a box of tissues and encourage him to wipe away the semen if ejaculation occurs.

EMOTIONS





PARENTS:

When your son is going through puberty he will experience emotional as well as physical changes. He may become argumentative, challenging, tired and tearful. Once again, this could be due to the influence of hormones. Your son will go through a range of emotions and may find it difficult to express them. These may be expressed in unacceptable behaviours. Try not to get too angry or frustrated with him as these negative emotions can be damaging to the relationship you have with your son. He will require understanding and reassurance from you to cope with his emotions when he is going through puberty. If he has any brothers or sisters, they will also need to be encouraged to treat him with understanding.


RELATIONSHIPS




 Girls think girls are nice.

 Boys think girls are nice.



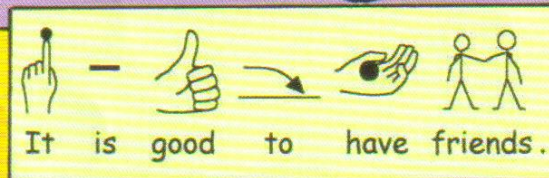
 Girls think boys are nice.

 Boys think boys are nice.

PARENTS:

As your son gets older he will become sexually and emotionally attracted to other people. This is part of puberty. He may wish to explore his feelings further by touching and kissing other people. However, he will need to be made aware that some people may not want him to.

RELATIONSHIPS



PARENTS:

Sharing, trust and understanding are the basis of a good friendship. Friendships can become more established during puberty, at school and through family life.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Q. Do parents of other boys, who have learning disabilities, experience the same problems and concerns about puberty issues?

A. Yes they do - in varying degrees. Some parents find it difficult to accept that their child is becoming sexually aware. The common problem shared is that your son has the body of a teenager, but his development level makes it more difficult for him to understand himself - his changing shape, his emotions, his desires and his behaviour. Within learning disabilities there is a wide

spectrum which means different boys do have different problems. The issues discussed in this booklet form a core which is common to most boys and their parents.

Q. How can I teach my son to shave?

A. When your son begins to develop facial hair, he may need to shave only once or twice a week. Wet shaving is advised to begin with, as electric shavers can make facial hair grow tougher. However, you may find it easier to use an electric shaver from the start, if

Q & A Continued.

wet shaving poses any difficulty. When your son's face first requires shaving, you will probably need to do it for him. Do this with him watching in the mirror. If he can, in time, he may want to shave himself. For some boys, this will not be possible and you will have to provide assistance. If shaving becomes a major challenge, perhaps your son would like to consider growing a beard in the future.

Q. How can I encourage my son to use tissues if ejaculation occurs as a result of masturbation?

A. Use this booklet to show a picture of a boy wiping himself. If your son has a real problem understanding the need to wipe himself after ejaculation, you can obtain baby-sized male dolls, so you could also demonstrate how he should wipe himself.

Q. How can I cope with my son's *verbal* anger, frustration and aggression?

A. It is recognised teenage behaviour to show such emotions, at a time when the body is changing and when your son is showing a growing desire for independence. As parents, you need to try to avoid confrontation for things that don't matter. At times, confrontation is unavoidable, in which case it is important that you try to remain calm and not return his anger with yours. When he is verbally aggressive tell him that you don't like it and it's not nice to talk to anyone like that. Try not to return it with insults or your own aggression.

Q. How can I cope with my son's *physical* anger, frustration and aggression?

A. Physical aggression can be more difficult to cope with than verbal aggression, because you may need to protect yourself and others, as well as furniture and objects.

Protect people *before* objects. When anyone is being physically aggressive they are acting with emotion, so *will not* be open to reason. Keep your voice slow and calm. Repeat a simple instructional phrase that may stop his action, such as "go and sit down", or "put the chair down". This is more effective than saying "stop it", as that will not help him work out what to do. When he is calm after an event, discuss it briefly with him, explaining why he should not hurt you or others or destroy objects.

It is important to have consistency of approach, behaving in the same way each time he shows aggression. This will help him to understand what is appropriate.

Try to be one step ahead and if you know what will trigger an aggressive physical incident, try to avoid the trigger.

If it is something that has to occur daily, for example going to bed, offer rewards for compliance and give praise when things go well.

Q. How can my son cope with his *own* anger?

A. If your son can understand explanations of why he needs to be kind, not hurt others, not be rude

Q & A Continued.

etc, have a chat with him at a convenient and calm time. Be positive and remind him when he has achieved in these areas. Give him strategies to enable him to cope with how he feels. For example, when he's angry let him know that he can tell you by signing or speaking, not by hitting people. Also it is a good idea for him to have time on his own to calm down, for example in his bedroom. After he has calmed down, discuss it briefly with him and carry on as normal. Don't refer to the event during future incidents.

Q. How do I approach my son's sexual and emotional attraction to other people?

A. Accept that during and after puberty it is perfectly normal to feel sexually and emotionally attracted to others. This is an inevitable part of growing up. Your son may naturally want to be with girls and may want to touch them, dance closely with them or put his arm around them. Often a boy may be attracted to one particular girl or sometimes there is rivalry between two or

more boys for a girl's affection. The attraction may go further and your son may want to touch, stroke or explore in a more intimate manner. You need to tell your son what you find acceptable. Each family will have its own ideas. You should not expect your son to automatically know what is socially or morally acceptable. You need to clearly reinforce what you decide is acceptable within your family. It is possible that your son may be sexually and emotionally attracted to other boys and not to girls, or as well as girls. All boys need to form friendships with other boys and want to do 'boys together' activities. This is perfectly natural and is different to sexual attraction.

We are all sexual beings by nature. It is now generally recognised that no one chooses his or her sexuality. Our sexuality is an essential part of who we are, how we behave, and how we see ourselves in relation to others.

Today's culture allows young people to explore their sexuality and not just accept what society has, in the past, seen as 'normal'.

FURTHER HELP

This booklet will not be able to answer all your questions regarding the issues you and your son may encounter during his journey through puberty. If you do have questions that are not answered by this booklet, you could approach your son's school nurse or class teacher, who may be able to offer advice, or point you towards an individual or organisation that will be able to help.

Text by Linda Ebdon, Paul Hopkins and Audrey Hoyes. Cartoons by Mike Higgs.
Thank you to colleagues, Bettridge School boys, their parents and carers for their input to Ready, Steady, Change!

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