

Year 4

Coping with change

Lesson 2: Understanding periods

Lesson context and overview

This is the second of three lessons exploring how our bodies start to change as we enter puberty. This lesson introduces menstruation in a simple way to enable both boys and girls to understand what it is and why it happens.

Note: this lesson can be delivered before lesson 1 (What is puberty?), if preferred.

Curriculum links

Physical health and mental wellbeing: Changing adolescent body

Pupils will learn:

- key facts about puberty and the changing adolescent body, particularly from age 9 through to age 11, including physical and emotional changes
- key facts about puberty, the changing adolescent body and menstrual wellbeing.

Resources

Presentation slides

A selection of sanitary products, such as a variety of pads, tampons and a moon cup (for information only – see note below about products recommended for this age group)

Periods: Myth or reality? cards, one set per small group (with teacher response sheet)

Pupil worksheet: *Letter to planet Borg*

Key vocabulary

menstruation, eggs, sanitary pads, periods

Learning objectives

We are learning about:

- what periods are and why females have them.

Learning outcomes

We will be able to:

- explain what periods are and why females have them
- identify and dispel common myths around having periods.

Essential teaching guidance

Please ensure you have read the guidelines on creating a safe teaching and learning environment before delivering these lessons. To create a climate of trust for safe and effective learning, ensure that ground rules are established or revisited before delivery. It is advisable to teach this lesson in a mixed-sex class group; however, if your school decides that this is not appropriate (for example, if there are valid parental or faith-based concerns) then you should ensure that both boys and girls receive the same lesson separately.

Starter/baseline activity

Explain that today we will be learning about an aspect of puberty and growing up that only affects girls, and use presentation slide 3 to introduce the words 'menstruation' and 'periods'. Clarify that menstruation is another term to describe periods and that during the lesson we will use the word period. Explain to the class that all females will at some point start their periods, usually between the ages of 7 and 18. However, everyone needs to know about periods to understand how and why they happen, and what to expect when they do.

Give each pupil a post-it or piece of paper and ask them to write down one thing they either already know or would like to know about periods – make clear that it is ok if they have never heard of them. Collect the pieces of paper/post-its and use them to help you gauge existing understanding and to be aware of any misconceptions that might help in guiding Core activity 1 below.

Core activities

1. Describe to the class what a period is, using slide 6 to illustrate what happens and where in the body. Make sure you explain periods in a positive way and explain that this is a very special change that a female's body goes through. Show pupils a selection of sanitary products and explain that there are different sizes and shapes depending on what people need or prefer.

Note: For Primary age pupils, sanitary pads are recommended. Although tampons and moon cups are an option they should encourage conversations at home before considering use of these.

2. Explain to pupils that having a period is natural and normal for all females, but that there are some myths around having periods and sometimes it is difficult to know which ones are true.

Organise pupils into small groups and give each group a set of *Periods: myth or reality?* cards. Ask groups to discuss which of the statements could be a myth and which could be the reality, and to sort them into the two piles. Reassure pupils that they may not know all the correct answers and that it is okay to guess or discuss each statement together.

Myth and reality cards:

- It hurts when you have a period.
- You should not have a bath while you are on your period.
- You cannot exercise when you are having a period.
- There is always someone you can talk to about periods if you need to.
- Periods always start for a girl at the age of 15.
- Boys do not have periods.
- Periods can last between two and seven days each month.
- Using a sanitary pad helps keep a girl clean and hygienic when she is on her period.
- You can't go swimming when you have a period.
- Everyone knows if a girl is having her period.

At the end of the activity, ask groups for feedback and discuss each point (there is a teacher response sheet provided for information). You could also demonstrate a sanitary pad here as well as telling the class where to access sanitary pads at school if they need to use one.

You can also use the statements/questions pupils recorded on pieces of paper/post-its in the starter activity to guide discussion here, responding to any additional questions asked or misconceptions raised.

3. Give each pupil a copy of the *Letter to planet Borg* worksheet and ask them to write a reply to Blerk, sharing what they know about periods. They can do this individually, in pairs or put together a response in a small group.

Plenary

Discuss with the pupils what they learned about periods. Ask volunteers to share one sentence from their letters to Blerk. Discuss each one with the class to ensure they all understand the basics of what periods are and why they happen.

Assessment

Feedback from the starter activity, and discussion around myths and realities about periods can be used to assess general understanding of periods and the progression in knowledge and understanding as a result of the lesson. Pupils' letters to Blerk can be used to assess pupils' understanding of the learning objectives.