

Top Tips for Caring

for Skin, Hair, and Nails during Puberty

Toenails

Here are tips for caring for toenails:

- ▶ Keep your feet and toenails clean. Wash them daily, especially between the toes. Dry your feet, especially between the toes.
- ▶ Put lotion on your feet, especially your heels. Do not put lotion on or between your toes. This can cause fungus.
- ▶ Trim your toenails every two weeks or as needed. Cut them straight across. Do not round them. Do not cut them too short. This can cause ingrown toenails.
- ▶ It is easiest to trim toenails right after your shower or bath, while they are soft.
- ▶ Keep your feet dry by wearing dry, cotton socks and dry shoes.
- ▶ Avoid cutting toenails too short or in a curve. Avoid sharing shoes. Avoid wearing tight shoes.
- ▶ Talk to a trusted adult if your feet itch, or your toenails look thick or turn a different color.



Summary...

You can always ask a parent, caregiver, or another trusted adult for help or advice about personal hygiene. They probably have some tips for you, too.

Personal hygiene habits are a good way to show that you are responsible. Being clean feels good. Being healthy keeps your body in tip-top condition for life. Plus, when you know how to take care of yourself, you feel good about yourself!



Sources:

- American Academy of Dermatology
- American Cancer Society
- Children's Hospital of Richmond at VCU
- Healthline
- KidsHealth
- Mayo Clinic
- Medical News Today

Introducing...Hygiene!

Why do I need to change the way I take care of my body?

Good question! Your body is changing in new ways as you go through puberty (pyoo-ber-tee). This happens when your body produces new hormones that tell your body to grow into an adult. These changes create a new need for hygiene. Remember: You only get one body, so treat it well!

What is hygiene?

Hygiene (hi-jeen) is the practice of keeping things clean and healthy. Personal hygiene is the practice of keeping your body clean and healthy.

How does puberty affect personal hygiene?

Remember those new hormones that your body is making? Well, those hormones change your body in many ways. You can learn to take care of your new body in new ways. Let's learn about some of the ways your body changes and how you can practice your new personal hygiene. Start now to build habits that will prevent problems.





Skin Care Habits

Skin is the largest organ in the human body, and it has many jobs! Your skin protects your body from infection by keeping germs out. It makes oil and keeps water inside and so you don't dry out. Skin regulates your body temperature by sweating.

Oil Glands

Skin has oil glands that keep your skin and hair from drying out. During puberty, hormones tell the oil glands to make more oil called sebum. Sebum can clog the pores in the skin and cause acne. Acne is also called pimples, zits, blackheads, or blemishes. This usually happens on the skin of the face, neck, back, upper chest, and shoulders.

Here are some ways to care for oily skin:

- ▶ Wash the area two times a day. Use a soft washcloth, warm water, and gentle soap or cleanser. Do not scrub.
- ▶ Use only oil-free makeup, sunscreen, and moisturizers. Remove makeup every night.
- ▶ Avoid picking, popping, or squeezing pimples. This can lead to scars and infection.
- ▶ Use special soaps and creams that are made to treat acne.
- ▶ Change your pillowcase every few days so your face rests on a clean, oil-free pillow each night.
- ▶ Keep oily hair off your face.
- ▶ See your healthcare provider if acne gets worse.



Nail Care Habits

Fingernails and toenails protect the ends of your fingers and toes. Fingernails also help you pick up small objects. Your nails grow all the time. That means you will need to take care of them your whole life.



Fingernails

Here are tips for caring for fingernails:

- ▶ Keep your hands and fingernails clean. Wash your hands before and after you eat, after using the bathroom, after sneezing or coughing into your hand, and whenever you touch something dirty.
- ▶ Trim your nails every week or two. Cut them straight across. Then, round them in a small curve. Use manicure scissors, clippers, and/or nail file.
- ▶ Trim hangnails with clippers or small scissors. Do not bite or pull them. Hangnails are small pieces of skin next to the fingernail.
- ▶ Use hand lotion and rub it into the fingernails, too.



- ▶ Avoid biting fingernails. Avoid picking or pulling on hangnails.
- ▶ Limit use of nail polish remover; it dries the fingernail.

Body Hair

During puberty, hair begins to grow thicker and in new places. First, you will notice fine hair growing around the genitals. These are called pubic hairs. Over time, these hairs get coarser and darker. Later, hair grows in the armpits, on the arms and legs, on the face, and the chest. Only two places don't grow hair: the palms of your hands and the soles of your feet. The amount of body hair varies widely from person to person. Here are some tips for body hair care:



- ▶ You can leave your body hair natural, or you can decide to trim or remove it. This is a personal choice.
- ▶ Ask a parent or other trusted adult for their advice.
- ▶ Shaving is one way to remove unwanted hair. It is done with a razor or electric shaver. Ask a trusted adult to show you how to shave before trying it.
- ▶ Hair can also be removed by plucking, waxing, or applying depilatories (a cream that dissolves hair).

Remember: No one looks at you as closely as you do, so they won't notice the little hairs that you see in the mirror.

Sweat Glands

Sweat is made by sweat glands in your skin. Sweat doesn't smell bad until it mixes with bacteria. Then... look out!



Your body has two kinds of sweat glands:

1. Eccrine sweat glands are all over the body. They regulate body temperature. When you get hot, they release water. When that water evaporates, it cools you down.
2. Apocrine sweat glands are in the underarms and genitals. They become active during puberty. When sweat from these glands combines with bacteria, it causes body odor.

Before puberty, bodies don't smell bad; but once your body begins puberty, that changes. In fact, body odor is an early sign that someone is beginning puberty. You will need some new hygiene habits, if you want to smell fresh and clean. Here are some habits that help:

- ▶ Shower or bathe every day. If you have dry skin, wash every other day. Use soap and a washcloth. Start at the top and work down. Wash the cleanest parts before the germiest parts (your bottom and feet). After soaping up, rinse off with warm water.
- ▶ Dry your body by patting or gently rubbing. Be sure to dry between your toes to prevent stinky feet.
- ▶ Use anti-perspirant to reduce sweating armpits. It works best to apply it to clean, dry armpits before you go to bed every night.

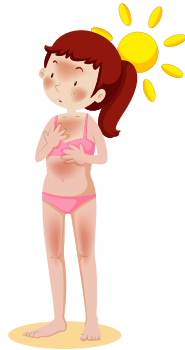


- ▶ Use deodorant to reduce armpit odors. Apply it every day to clean, dry armpits.
- ▶ Wear clean clothes every day. Change socks and underwear daily. If clothes smell bad, you smell bad.
- ▶ Wash and dry feet carefully. Wear clean, dry, cotton socks. Wear dry shoes made of natural materials.

Skin Color

Your skin color is part of what makes you unique. Skin has pigment that gives each person their skin color. The main pigment is called melanin. The more melanin in the skin, the darker a person's skin color. Skin pigment protects us from the sun. But we need to protect our skin even more.

Wear sunscreen to avoid sunburn, cancer, and aging skin. Read the labels. Look for three things when you select your sunscreen:



1. **Broad Spectrum:** Sunlight has two kinds of rays that can cause skin cancer, skin aging, and sunburn: UVA and UVB. Select a sunscreen that says it is Broad Spectrum to block both.
2. **Sun Protection Factor:** Sunscreen filters out the sun's harmful rays and is measured in Sun Protection Factor or SPF. The more it protects from the sun, the higher the SPF number. Use a sunscreen that says SPF 30 or more.
3. **Water Resistant:** Sunscreens that claim to be water resistant must say if they last 40 or 80 minutes while swimming or sweating. No sunscreens are waterproof, so they must be reapplied at least every two hours... or more often if you are getting wet.

Wear protective clothing, including a hat and sunglasses that block UV light.

Avoid the sun when its rays are strongest, between 10 am and 4 pm.

Avoid tanning beds and sunlamps. They damage the skin and can cause skin cancer.

Hair Care Habits

Hair grows all the time. A hair will live for two to seven years; then, it falls out and a new one grows in. That means you need to take good care of your hair, so it is healthy all those years.

Scalp Hair

The skin on top of your head is called your scalp. It grows hair and has oil glands. During puberty, these oil glands can produce more oil and make hair oily. Here are some tips for scalp and hair care:

- ▶ Know your hair. Straight hair tends to be more oily; curly hair tends to be drier.
- ▶ Wash your hair each one to seven days, depending on how dry or oily it is.
- ▶ Use a mild shampoo to gently wash hair. Rinse all the shampoo out when finished.
- ▶ Avoid using harsh chemicals on your hair. They can dry out the hair and make it brittle. Dry hair breaks off more easily.
- ▶ Ask a trusted adult for help if your scalp itches or flakes, or if you have questions.



Use natural products when you can. It's better for your body and good for the earth.