

UNIVERSITY OF
LOUISVILLE®

KENTUCKY AUTISM
TRAINING CENTER 

Puberty

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Objectives

1. Participants will leave with an understanding of how puberty can affect children with autism.
 2. Participants will leave with an understanding of special concerns for children with autism during puberty.
 3. Participants will leave with resources that they can use in their environment.
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**Puberty is going to happen whether
you are ready for it or not**

Sometimes, preparing your student/child
with ASD is more about appropriate
responses to events like menstruation,
rather than when and why these
changes occur.

Just like anyone else...

Puberty is the process of physical changes by which a child's body becomes an adult body capable of reproduction

There is a wide range of normal ages for the process of puberty...

Girls: 8-13

Boys: 10-15

Remember...

People with ASD often need a longer period of time to understand and adjust to changes in their lives

Where do we start?



General Guidelines

- Consider your student/child's level of development
- Use age appropriate materials
- Use appropriate vocabulary
- Communicate with your student's team members and parents
- Be respectful to family beliefs/concerns

General Guidelines

- Be clear, concise, and concrete
- Be explicit
- Chunk information into more manageable blocks
- Use proven teaching strategies and materials to teach hygiene skills, etc.

What type of skills should we teach?

What type of Skills should be taught?

Start early by teaching :

1. Public places vs. Private places

- Personal Space

What type of skills should be taught?

2. Hygiene

- a) Feminine care
- b) Independent bathing focusing on cleaning private parts
- c) Shaving
- d) Face wash/Acne care
- e) Clothes selection; determining when it is dirty

What type of skills should be taught?

3. Sexual Health

a) Changing Bodies

- » Development of breasts
- » Hair growth
- » Lower voice/adams apple

b) Responding to sexual attraction

- » Identifying feelings/bodily responses
- » Masturbation

What type of skills should be taught?

4. Sexual Health

c) Sexual Experiences

- » Spectrum from holding hands to intercourse
- » Information on pregnancy, infections, etc.
- » Birth Control

d) Visiting doctor

- Gynecologist annual exams
- Annual physicals for males

Why does these skills require direct instruction?

- Deficits in theory of mind, appearance/smell impact on others is not apparent
- New skills are necessary (e.g. shaving, feminine care, deodorant) and most likely won't be learned through casual observation; instruction needs systematic approach
- Individuals with ASD oftentimes emotionally mature slower than their bodies mature; vulnerable to manipulation and peer pressure

Potential Helpful Hints:

- Explain bodily function inherent to being a boy and being a girl
- Practice wearing a pad before beginning menstrual cycle; think of pre-teaching & sensory issues
- When teaching body changes, use pictures of trusted adults of both sexes across the lifespan (babies, children, teens, adults)

Potential Helpful Hints:

- Remember to program for generalization; different types of deodorant, pads, shaving materials, etc.
- Don't think the obvious is obvious; teach the details
- Use multiple means of expression; especially with more complex issues (i.e. relationship building, flirting, communication)
- Be concrete
 - ✓ Avoid euphemisms and metaphors (e.g. "birds & bees")

How do we teach these skills?

- **Use Evidence-Based Practices!!!!**
 - ✓ Direct instruction using response prompting strategies
 - ✓ Video Modeling
 - ✓ Social Narratives
 - ✓ Visual Supports
 - ✓ Self-Management

Be Creative!!!

What skill do we start with & when do we start?



Explain the rules surrounding private behavior:

- Approach the subject with maturity and calm understanding
- Where is the behavior is appropriate?
- When is the behavior appropriate?
- Make sure person with ASD understands consequences for engaging in behavior publicly
- Person will recognize non-verbal cues to stop behavior in public
- Use aids and strategies that assist your student in learning

It's important to know the difference between *public* and *private*

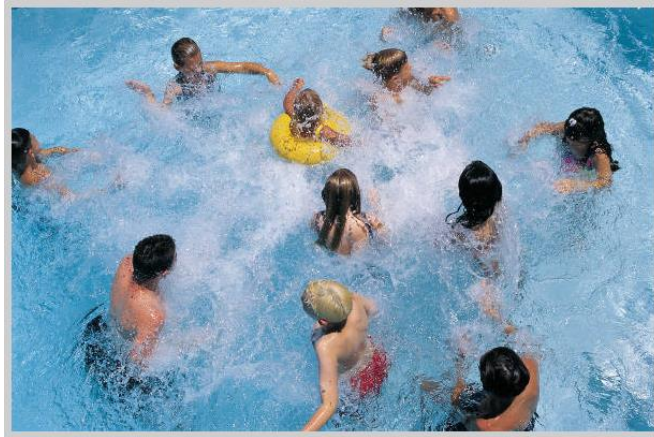
- Public = where and when there are more people than just you
- Private = it is just you

Some behaviors that are O.K. to do
privately are not O.K. to do in public

What is a private place?



What is a public place?



Public vs. Private Behavior

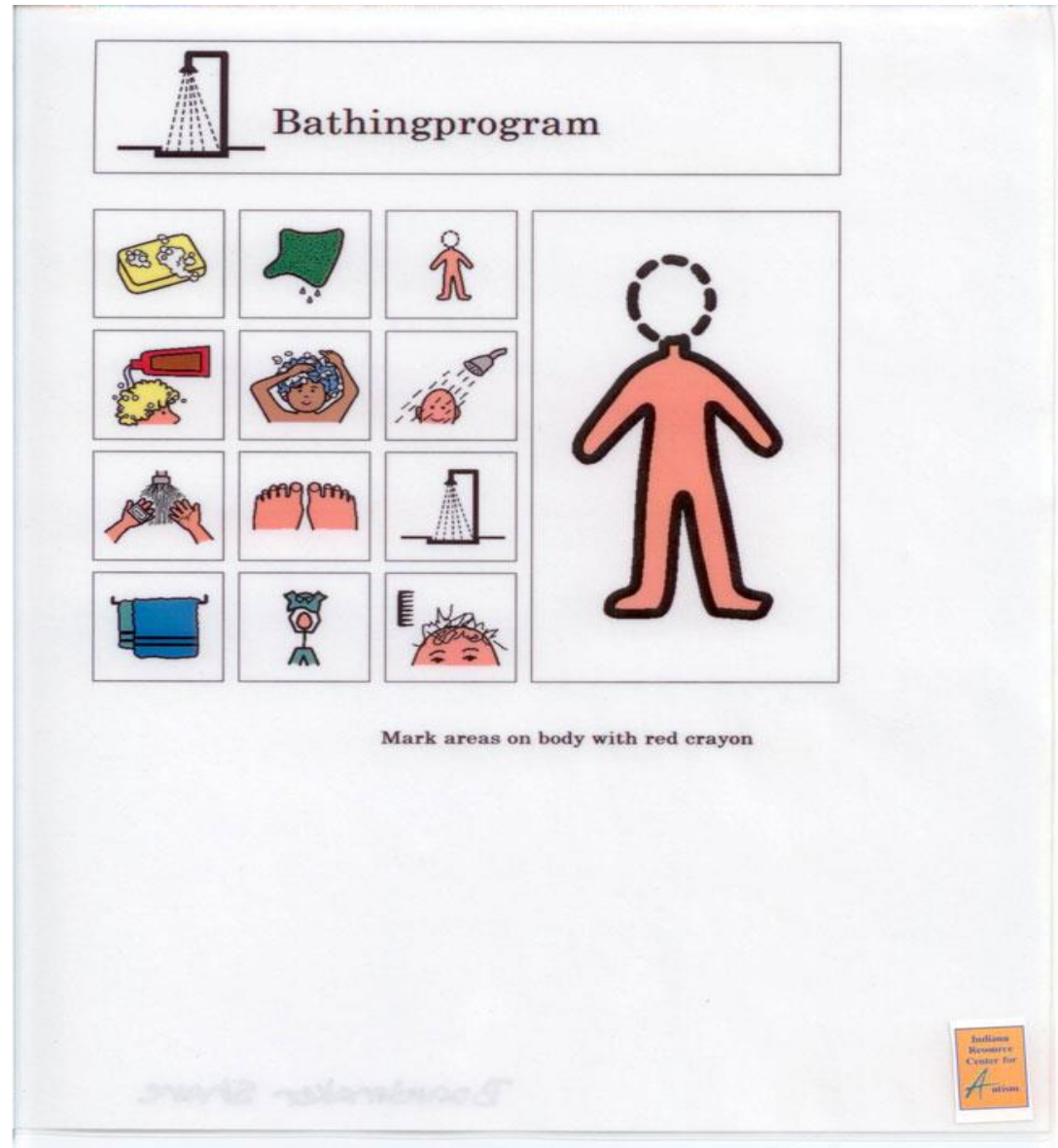
- Hugging a friend
- Picking your nose
- Taking your clothes off
- Touching private areas
- Passing gas
- Kissing your parent
- Kissing your significant other

Public vs. Private

Providing an alternate response

- “Hands together” or “Clasp hands”
- Ask for them to holding something, open car door, etc.
- Don’t draw attention to behavior


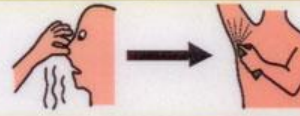


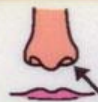


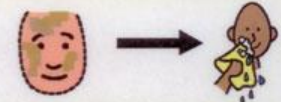






Other Topics in Puberty



http://www.iidc.indiana.edu/styles/iidc/deimages/IRCA/visual_support/healthBathingProgram2.jpg

Before we go out today, make sure you have checked these things?

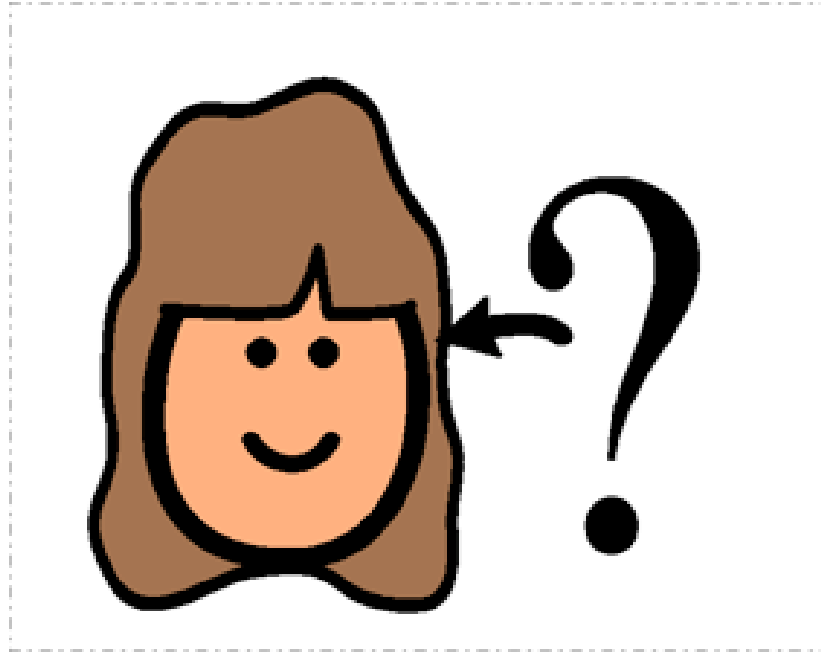


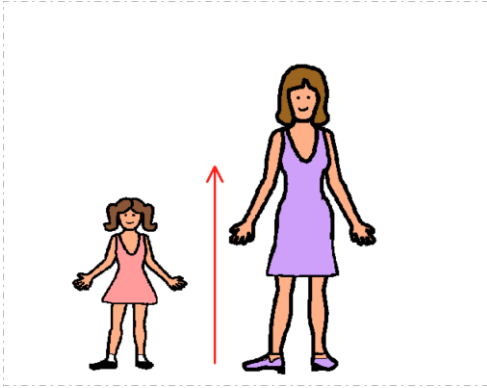
- ☐  Smell your armpits.
Do they smell fresh?
If not, put some deodorant on. 
- ☐  Look at your clothes. Are they clean?
If not, change them, or clean them. 
- ☐  Look at your nose - is it clean?
If not, blow it. 
- ☐  Look at your face - is it clean?
If not, wash it. 
- ☐  Look at your hair - does it look neat?
If not, brush it. 
- ☐  Look at your clothes - are they neat?
If not, fix them. 
- ☐  Go to the toilet. Make sure your undies are clean and that they don't smell. If they are not clean, change them 

http://www.iidc.indiana.edu/styles/iidc/deimages/IRCA/visual_support/healthBeforeWeGoOut.jpg

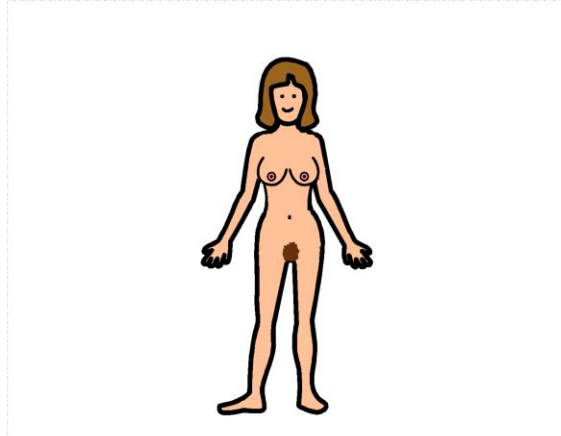
Menstruation

“Why do I have to wear a sanitary napkin?”

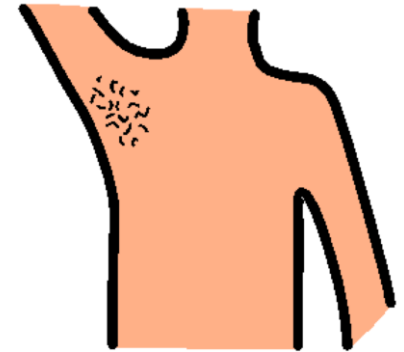




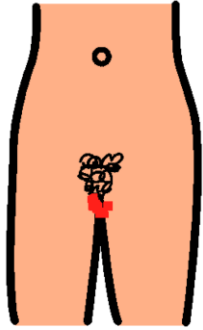
Most girls grow into women.
Every year, I am growing up.



As I get older, I might notice changes in my body. These changes could include developing breasts and growing pubic hair.



I might also notice hair growing in my armpits.



Many girls will begin to have menses. This means that I might have blood come from my vagina for several days each month.



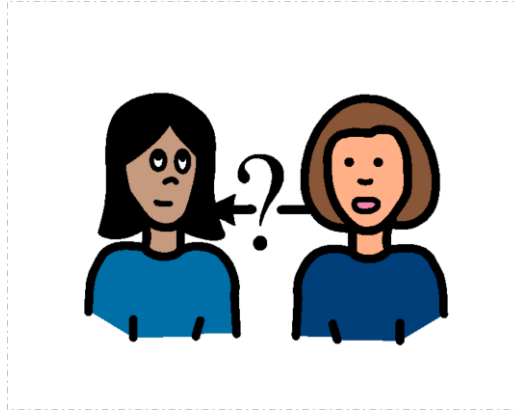
Some people call this a “period”. This is normal. It is okay.



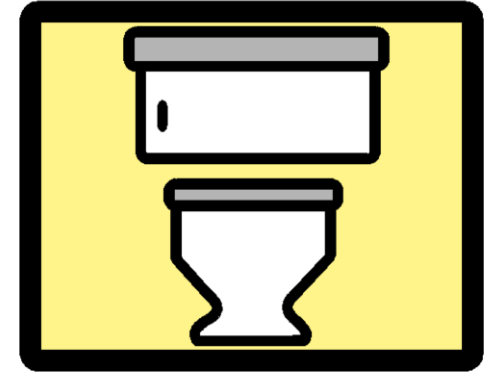
When I have my period, I can wear a sanitary napkin to keep my clothes from getting dirty.



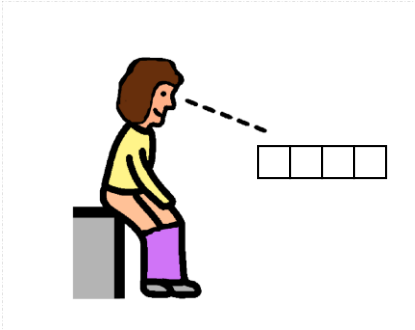
The sanitary napkin goes inside my underpants to keep them from getting blood on them. This is important.



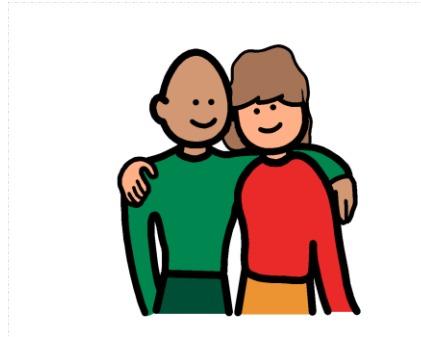
I will know when it is time to change my sanitary napkin if it has blood on it. If I need help, I can ask _____.



I can go into the bathroom to change my sanitary napkin. **This is a good thing to do.**



When I am in the bathroom, I can check my picture reminders to make sure I can follow all of the steps



My friends will like it if I wear a sanitary napkin and keep my clothes clean when I have my period.



I will try to wear a sanitary napkin when I have my period.

Modeling example:

Teaching hygiene associated with menstruation:

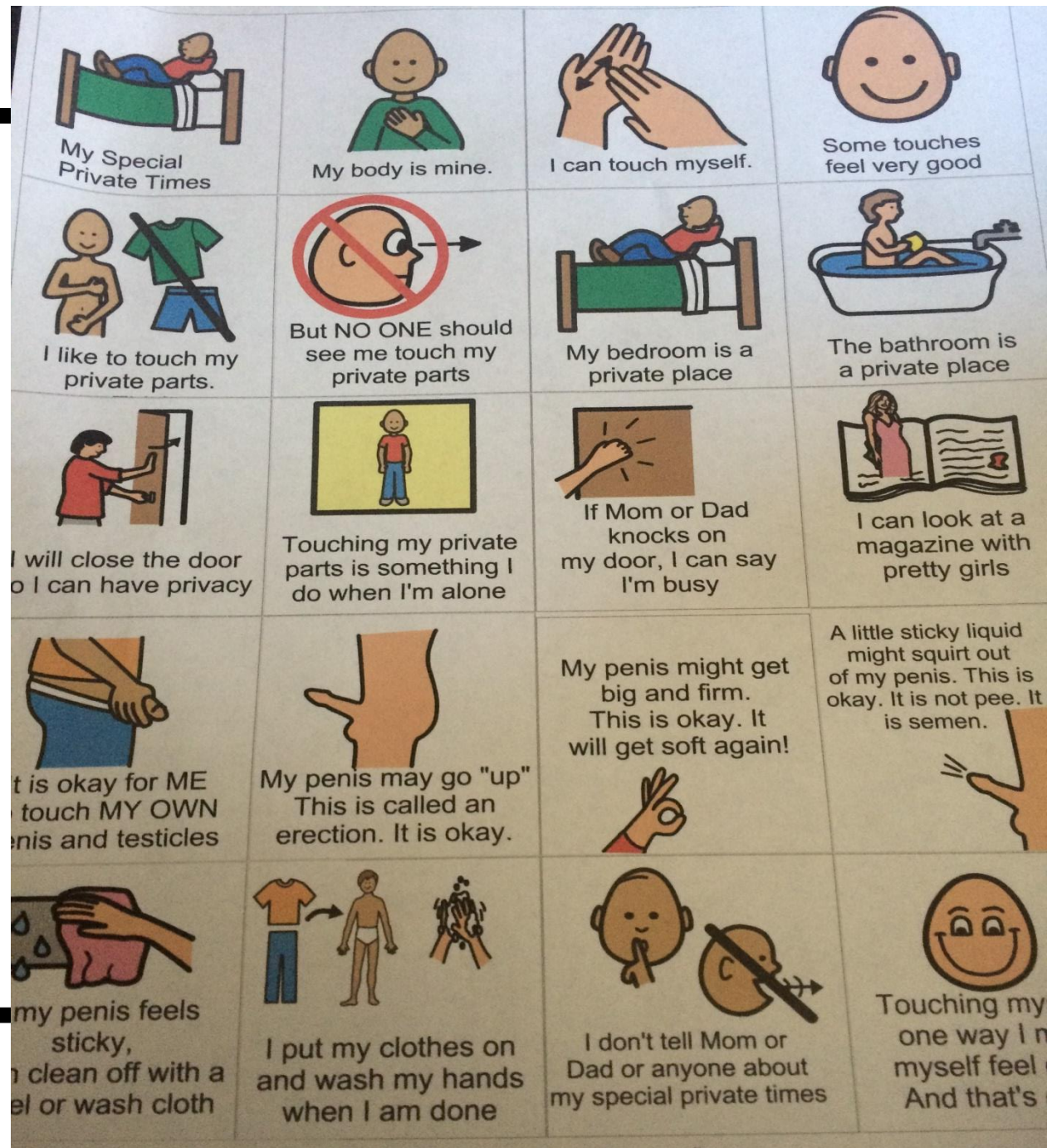
- Phase 1: Parent places a pad in a pair of underwear and colors it red. Model how to take out the pad and discard, or if appropriate ask for help (dependent on the child's ability)
- Phase 2: Parent places pads in 5 set of underwear and colors a few of them. The parent then present a pair of underwear and asks the student what to do? The student says perform targeted response (e.g. ok, I do nothing, or ask for help/take it out and throw it away)
- Phase 3: The parent has the student close her eyes and put on a pair of underwear (can be over the pants if necessary). Then presents the same discrimination task.

Masturbation

Strategies for Intervening if a student masturbates in public:



- Interrupt the behavior
- Remind the person of the appropriate time and place for the behavior
- Redirect the person to an activity that requires the use of both hands
- Redirect the person to an activity that involves intense focus or high amounts of physical movement
- Redirect the person to an appropriate place to have privacy such as a bathroom, shower, or private bedroom
- Provide visual aid that shows when the person will get an opportunity to meet their personal needs

http://www.livingwellwithautism.com/yahoo_site_admin/assets/docs/masturbation_social_story.184124213.pdf






<http://theautismhelper.com/teens-tenth-sexual-behaviors/screen-shot-2013-03-08-at-3-55-13-pm/>




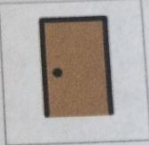
No Hands in Pants





I am getting older and my body is changing.

Sometimes it might feel good to put my hands in my pants and touch myself.

I cannot do this at school. This is not good behavior. I can only do this at home in my bedroom with my door closed. It is private behavior.

If I do this at school, it might make my teacher angry and my friends might not want to play with me. When I keep my hands out my pants, everyone will be happy with me.

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Good touch Vs. Bad Touch

Teaching children to be safe



https://estheticnurer.files.wordpress.com/2015/04/private_parts_and_touching-224155032.pdf

Helpful Sites & Resources

- <https://www.autismspeaks.org/science/find-resources-programs/autism-treatment-network/tools-you-can-use/atn-air-p-puberty-adolescence-resource>
- <http://www.iidc.indiana.edu/pages/visualsupports>
- http://www.livingwellwithautism.com/how_to_use_social_stories/social_stories-behaviors

Helpful site & Resources

- <http://annakonline.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/puberty1.pdf>
- <http://theautismhelper.com/teens-tenth-sexual-behaviors/>
- <http://kc.vanderbilt.edu/healthybodies/files/HealthyBodies-Boys-web.pdf>

Helpful site & Resources

- <https://skinnurse.wordpress.com/2015/04/27/private-parts-safe-touch-and-unsafe-touch-social-stories-free-printable/>