

Sexual Health & Hygiene

Grades 7 and 8, Lesson #3

Time Needed

One class period

Student Learning Objectives

To be able to...

1. Distinguish helpful from useless and/or harmful health and hygiene practices that accompany puberty.
2. Explain that health/hygiene product advertisers do not always have the consumers' best interests in mind.

Agenda

1. Explain the relevance of today's lesson to the unit and to students' lives.
2. Complete the "*Sexual Health and Hygiene Reference Sheet*" aloud, as a large group activity.
3. Answer students' verbal and anonymous questions.
4. Assign homework.

Materials Needed

Student Materials (for each student):

- *Sexual Health and Hygiene Reference Sheet*
- *Family Homework Exercise: Health and Hygiene*
- *Sexual Health and Hygiene Worksheet*
- *Family Homework Letter (Appendix B)*

Activities

1. Explain the relevance of today's lesson and how it relates to what you have studied so far:

It's not enough to know what happens during puberty. It's also important to learn how to keep an adult body healthy, clean and free of infection. We can use the analogy of a car. You **could** drive your new sports car until it fell apart, but most people **wouldn't**. They want to learn how and when to get it tuned up, etc. You are all getting 'new' young adult bodies. Some of you already have them, and you all will before you graduate from high school. Just as there are things you need to know to keep a new car running at its peak, there are things you need to know to keep your 'new' adult body running at its peak.

2. Complete the "**Sexual Health and Hygiene Reference Sheet**" aloud, as a large group activity.

Go around the class and have each person try answering a question. There should be enough so that every student gets a chance. After the student guesses the answer, ask the class (by a show of hands) how many people agree. Then announce whether the answer was correct (if not, compliment the person for trying), and read the explanation aloud. Spell the answer on the blackboard and have the class fill it in on their own copy. Thus, the steps are:

- A student guesses at the answer.
- A show of hands indicates how many agree.
- You announce the correct answer and read the explanation aloud.
- You spell it on the blackboard.
- Students fill it in on the worksheet.

Another option is to have *teams* try to fill the reference sheet in ... and give points for correct answers. In either case, it is important to read the explanations aloud.

Here are the correct answers and explanations:

1. Q: A male who has not been circumcised needs to wash under the _____.
A: Foreskin

Explanation: Uncircumcised men and boys need to pull back the foreskin gently and wash the glans of the penis every day. Otherwise, bacteria may grow in the discharge under the foreskin, causing painful infections.

2. Q: To control underarm odor after puberty many people not only bathe or shower; they also use _____.
A: Deodorant or antiperspirant

Explanation: In many cultures within the United States, underarm odor is considered unpleasant. Many people use a deodorant (to control odor) or an antiperspirant (to stop

wetness). Not all cultures or families agree, however, and it isn't medically necessary.

3. Q: The kind of protection a girl wears inside the vagina when she menstruates is called a _____.

A: Tampon

Explanation: Tampons are little bundles of cottony material, about the size of one finger. They are one way of soaking up the menstrual flow.

4. Q: The kind of protection a girl wears in her underpants when she menstruates is called a _____.

A: Sanitary pad or sanitary napkin.

Explanation: These pads are made of cottony material and they usually have adhesive to keep them in place. They are one way to soak up the menstrual flow.

5. Q: A tampon should be changed at least every how many hours?

A: Eight.

Explanation: If they are left in place too long, tampons can allow germs to multiply. They should never stay in more than eight hours.¹ So it is a good idea for a girl to use pads at night, even if she uses tampons in the daytime, in case she sleeps longer than that.

6. Q: The formal term for a "jock strap" is _____.

A: Athletic Supporter

Explanation: An athletic supporter is made out of stretchy material, sometimes with a protective cup. It supports and protects a man's or boy's genitals when he plays sports.

7. Q: A check-up for cancer of the cervix is called a _____.

A: Pap Test

Explanation: The doctor wipes a few cells from the cervix onto a slide. They are checked under a microscope so that she can be helped even before she actually has cancer.

8. Q: When should a girl or woman start to have pelvic exams?

A: Whenever she starts having vaginal intercourse – within a few months of starting -- or if she has problems.

Explanation: A pelvic exam is a check-up of a girl's or woman's reproductive system. It may or may not include a Pap test. She doesn't need to start having Pap tests until three years after she first has vaginal intercourse. If she hasn't had intercourse by age 21, she should have one then.² But everybody, male or female, should start having sexual health check-ups at least once a year, no matter how old they are, once they start having oral, anal or vaginal intercourse. A girl can get a pelvic exam sooner than that if she has questions or concerns.

9. Q: Name one place a person can go for a checkup of the reproductive system.

A: Your family doctor, a community clinic or a Public Health Department clinic.

Explanation: Any of these answers or the name of a specific clinic is good. All these places see both males and females, of all ages.

For clinics in King County (WA), see <http://www.metrokc.gov/health/famplan/clinics.htm>

For clinics elsewhere in Washington, see <http://www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/FPRH/fpclinics.htm>

For clinics in the U.S., see <http://opa.osophs.dhhs.gov/titlex/ofp-service-grantees.html>

10. Q: Name one thing you could do if you thought you might have a reproductive health problem.

A: Talk to your parents or another adult you trust. Go to the school nurse for information and advice. Go to the doctor.

Explanation: These kinds of health problems rarely go away without treatment. And sometimes you may end up relieved that nothing was actually wrong. Reproductive health problems happen to almost everybody at some time in their lives.

11. Q: Name one thing, besides sexually transmitted diseases, that can cause irritation or infection of the genitals.

A: Any of these answers counts

- Clothing that's too tight
- Nylon underwear
- Perfumed, colored toilet paper
- Not bathing or showering enough
- Bubble bath or soap that contains perfumes or deodorants

And also for girls:

- Pantyhose
- Douching or using feminine hygiene spray
- Wiping back to front when going to the bathroom
- Leaving a tampon in over six hours

And also for guys:

- Leaving sweaty jock straps on after playing sports

12. Q: True or False? It is important for girls and women to douche.

A: False

Explanation: Douching is rinsing out the vagina and doctors do **not** recommend it. "The vagina makes fluid or discharge to protect itself naturally, and douching can kill good bacteria and lead to vaginal infection. Douche often contains chemicals that are bad for the vagina. Even water and vinegar can wash out good bacteria or introduce bad bacteria."³

13. Q: True or False? It is a good idea for women and girls to use feminine hygiene sprays.

A: False

Explanation: These sprays can actually be harmful.⁴ The advertisers *want* a person to feel dirty and "yucky" so they can make money! But a healthy vagina is not dirty, as long as a person takes baths or showers. Its normal discharge cleans it; just as the discharge

in your eyes keep them clean.

14. Q: True or False? Jock itch is caused by a fungus.

A: True

Explanation: A fungus called “tinea” is what usually causes this itching around a person’s genitals. Tinea also causes athlete’s foot. It’s sometimes called “ringworm” but it doesn’t involve any actual worms; it is a fungus. The American Academy of Family Physicians recommends doing these things to prevent jock itch and athlete’s foot:

- “When you’re at home, take your shoes off and expose your feet to the air.
- “Change your socks and underwear [and gym clothes] every day, especially in warm weather.
- “Dry your feet carefully (especially between the toes) after using a locker room or public shower.
- “Avoid walking barefoot in public areas. Instead, wear “flip-flops” ...
- “Don’t wear thick clothing for long periods of time in warm weather. It will make you sweat more.
- “Throw away worn-out exercise shoes. Never borrow other people’s shoes.
- “Check your pets for [patches of fur loss. Dogs and cats can get tinea, too, and pass it to humans].⁵

15. Q: True or False? Men and boys who have been circumcised are healthier.

A: False

Explanation: Studies *have* found that men who have been circumcised have lower rates of certain infections and sexually transmitted diseases.⁶ But there are medical pros and cons to circumcision, so each family needs to make a decision about their own baby boy based on discussion with their doctor and their personal and religious beliefs.⁷ And as long as he washes under the foreskin regularly and uses a condom with sex, an uncircumcised guy can be just as clean and healthy as one who has been circumcised.⁸

16. Q: True or False? Young women, especially virgins, should use pads instead of tampons.

A: False

Explanation: Some people think that stretching the hymen makes a person no longer a virgin. That is *not* true.⁹ It is entirely up to her whether to use pads or tampons. Some women find one or the other more comfortable. Some women use both at once on heavy days. She may want to discuss the decision with her mother or family doctor.

17. Q: True or False? Tampons are fairly dangerous.

A: False

Explanation: They are actually quite *safe*! A girl just needs to know to:

- “Wash [her] hands with soap and water before inserting a tampon.
- “Be careful when [she] wipe[s] after using the bathroom to avoid getting the string of the tampon near [her] anus.
- “Avoid using tampons when [her] flow is very light [and use as smaller tampon when she has a lighter flow]. Removing a dry tampon can irritate [the] vagina.

- “Change [her] tampon at least every 8 hours.
- “Discontinue tampon use and go to the hospital if [she] develop[s] a high fever, vomiting, diarrhea, smelly or yellow discharge, and/or rash that looks like a sunburn.”¹⁰

18. Q: True or False? It is OK for girls to swim, bathe, and play sports during their menstrual periods.

A: True

Explanation: The idea that a person should sit around and do nothing is a myth! Some people even find that walking and other normal exercise helps if they have mild cramps.

Some women with cramps also find that it helps to:

- “Apply a heating pad to your lower abdomen (below your navel). Be careful NOT to fall asleep with it on.
- “Take warm showers or baths.
- “Drink warm beverages.
- “Do light circular massage with your fingertips around your lower abdomen.
- “[Eat foods with plenty of] complex carbohydrates, like whole grains, fruits, and vegetables.
- “[Cut down on] salt, sugar, alcohol, and caffeine.
- “Eat light but frequent meals.
- “Try over-the-counter anti-inflammatory medicine, such as ibuprofen [marketed as Advil® or Motrin®].
- “Practice relaxation techniques like meditation or yoga.
- “Try vitamin B6, calcium, and magnesium supplements, especially if your pain is from PMS.
- “Keep your legs elevated while lying down. Or lie on your side with knees bent.”¹¹

19. Q: True or False? Washing daily with soap and water prevents acne.

A: False

Explanation: People should wash gently with mild soap a couple of times a day and after heavy exercise, but it will not prevent acne altogether. Scrubbing hard can actually make acne worse. And thinking that washing will *cure* acne, makes it sound like people who have it are dirty. That’s not true and it’s just not fair.¹²

20. Q: True or False? Sweets and greasy foods cause acne.

A: False

Explanation: That’s just a myth. Sweets and greasy foods are not good for you for other reasons, but they have nothing to do with pimples.¹³

21. Q: True or False? Acne is caused by dirt getting under the skin.

A: False

Explanation: Sometimes maybe dirt does block the pores in the skin, but it is not the main reason people get acne. Usually skin blocks the pores, keeping the oils from getting out.

22. Q: True or False? Hormones are the cause of acne.

A: True

Explanation: That's why acne often starts during puberty, when a person's hormones are changing. Their skin becomes thicker and it has more oil underneath as the hair glands grow up. Sometimes the oil gets blocked underneath the skin.

23. Q: True or False? Facial scrubs which contain little particles to clean the skin can often clear up acne.

A: False

Explanation: The little particles might open up white heads and, by exposing them to oxygen turn them into black heads...but that does not get rid of the pimple. It may even make it easier for bacteria to get in!

24. Q: True or False? Non-prescription acne medications can help with acne.

A: True

Explanation: That's not just something advertisers say to make money! It's *true*; they *may* help somewhat if they're used regularly. Some people do notice side effects such as skin irritation, but they often go away eventually. If they don't, or if they get worse, a person should see the doctor. And people should realize that even the best medication for them may take as long as two months to make a difference.¹⁴

25. Q: True or False? People should brush their hair away from their faces if they want to avoid getting acne.

A: False

Explanation: Hair style makes no difference. If it makes a person feel more confident to cover the pimples with their bangs, it won't hurt. They should just be sure to keep their hair clean and not too oily.

26. Q: True or False? Most American teens get acne.

A: True

Explanation: Acne is certainly annoying, but it is very common. Eight or 9 out of 10 teens and young adults have it.¹⁵ It's not something to be ashamed of.

27. Q: True or False? Certain toothpastes and mouthwashes do truly make a person sexier.

A: False

Explanation: A lot of people find cleanliness sexy, but no one product is any better than any other, as far as making a person attractive. Advertisers say that, or make it seem like that, to make money.

28. Q: True or False? At puberty you start getting a kind of perspiration with an odor.

A: True

Explanation: *Before* puberty, people only sweat when they exercise or are hot and it doesn't usually smell. After puberty, a different group of glands produce sweat when you are worried or excited. This kind does have an odor. That's why most people bathe or shower more after their bodies start to change.

After the reference sheet is complete, summarize these points:

- Bathing or showering becomes especially important after puberty, and uncircumcised guys have to take special care to wash under the foreskin.
- No specific brand of toothpaste, mouthwash or deodorant, makes you any sexier than any other one, but many people do find cleanliness attractive.
- It doesn't matter whether girls use tampons or pads, as long as they change tampons at least every 8 hours, and pads as often as they need to for comfort and cleanliness.
- It's not a good idea for girls to douche or use feminine hygiene sprays, because they do *not* help them keep clean and are frequently harmful.
- It's not a good idea for anyone, male or female, to use perfumed or deodorant soaps or colored, perfumed toilet paper, especially if it irritates them. Girls should also avoid perfumed tampons.
- Tight pants and nylon underwear can irritate men's and women's genitals.
- There is not much a person can do to control acne, since hormones cause it, but over-the-counter acne medicines sometimes help.

Discussion questions might include:

- How might a person feel if they had to get a reproductive system checkup? Why?
- How do doctors feel about reproductive checkups (i.e. most doctors feel unembarrassed and professional whether they are examining patients' ears or genitals)?
- How should doctors treat people who need reproductive checkups?
- What can a person do to make the checkup less awkward and more comfortable?

3. Answer students' verbal and anonymous questions.

Homework

Students' options:

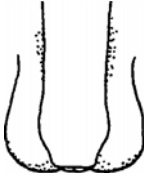
- ***A Family Homework Exercise: Health and Hygiene.*** Students will need to take home their ***Sexual Health and Hygiene Reference Sheets*** to complete this Family Homework and, as always, they will also need a copy of the ***Family Homework Letter*** (Appendix B).
- ***Sexual Health and Hygiene Worksheet***
- Bring in three magazine or newspaper ads that seem to suggest that certain "health" products will make you sexier, for "sex sells" notebook, bulletin board, or collage.

NOTE: If you assign a ***Family Homework Exercise***, it is essential to offer at least one alternative assignment. There will be some students who do not have a family member with whom they feel they can discuss these issues. Also, allow at least a week for ***Family Homework Exercises***, as many families are very busy.

Sexual Health and Hygiene Reference Sheet

Name _____ Date _____

1. A male who has not been circumcised needs to wash under the _____.



2. To control underarm odor after puberty many people not only bathe or shower; they also use _____.

3. The kind of protection a girl wears inside the vagina when she menstruates is called a _____.



4. The kind of protection a girl wears in her underpants when she menstruates is a _____.

5. A tampon should be changed at least every _____ hours.

6. The formal term for a “jock strap” is _____.

7. A check-up for cancer of the cervix is called a _____.

8. When should a girl or woman start having pelvic exams (check—ups of the reproductive system)? _____

9. Name some places a person can go for a check-up of the reproductive system.

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

10. Name some things you could do if you thought you might have a reproductive health problem.

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

11. Name some things, besides sexually transmitted diseases, that can cause irritation or infection of the genitals.

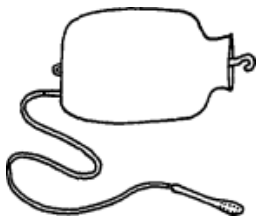
1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

True or False?

12. _____ It is important for girls and women to douche.



13. _____ It is a good idea for girls to use feminine hygiene sprays.

14. _____ “Jock itch” is caused by a fungus.

15. _____ Men and boys who have been circumcised are healthier.

16. _____ Young women, especially virgins, should use pads instead of tampons.

17. _____ Tampons are fairly dangerous.

18. _____ It is OK for girls to swim, bathe, and play sports during their menstrual period.

- 19. _____ Washing daily with soap and water prevents acne.
- 20. _____ Sweets and greasy foods cause acne.
- 21. _____ Acne is caused by dirt getting into the skin.
- 22. _____ Hormones are the cause of acne.



- 23. _____ Facial scrubs with little particles to clean the skin can often clear up acne.
- 24. _____ Non-prescription acne medications can help with acne.
- 25. _____ People should brush their hair away from their faces if they want to avoid getting acne.
- 26. _____ Most American teens get acne.
- 27. _____ Certain toothpastes and mouth washes do truly make a person more attractive.



- 28. _____ At puberty, you start getting a different kind of perspiration.

You can just keep this reference sheet, or use it to do ***“Family Homework Exercise: Health and Hygiene”***

Sexual Health and Hygiene Worksheet

Name _____ Due Date _____

Go to the store and find these products.

What store did you visit? _____

Items that are UNNECESSARY and sometimes HARMFUL:

1. "Feminine hygiene" sprays

Brand _____ Cost _____

Brand _____ Cost _____

2. Douches

Brand _____ Cost _____

Brand _____ Cost _____

3. Deodorant soaps

Brand _____ Cost _____

Brand _____ Cost _____

4. Deodorant tampons or sanitary pads

Brand _____ Cost _____

Brand _____ Cost _____

5. Acne medicines that contain scrubbing particles

Brand _____ Cost _____

Brand _____ Cost _____

Items that probably WON'T do harm:

1. White, unscented toilet paper

Brand _____ Cost _____

Brand _____ Cost _____

2. Deodorants and antiperspirants

Brand _____ Cost _____

Brand _____ Cost _____

3. Unscented, non-deodorant tampons or sanitary pads

Brand _____ Cost _____

Brand _____ Cost _____

Items that may actually HELP:

4. Toothpaste with fluoride

Brand _____ Cost _____

Brand _____ Cost _____

5. Non-prescription acne medicines that contain

Brand _____ Cost _____

Brand _____ Cost _____

A Family Homework Exercise: Health and Hygiene

ALL FAMILY HOMEWORK EXERCISES ARE OPTIONAL.

Directions: Doctors and scientists have learned a lot about health in the past 20 or 30 years. They give VERY DIFFERENT advice than they did when your parents and grandparents were growing up.

Your job is to find out, together, just how much has changed in one or two generations. Discuss the “**Sexual Health and Hygiene Reference Sheet**” with one another, circling any items that disagree with what was advised way back then. Talk about what we used to believe and how it is different from what doctors teach us today.

Example: In this example, the circled items are the ones that were *not* the same when your parents or grandparents were your age.

True or False?

1. T The sky is blue.
2. T The world is round.
3. T We can send electronic messages instantly.
4. F You can go without seat belts.

Fill in the Blanks

5. It's the 21st century.
6. The first month of the year is: January

NOTE: Turn in a Family Homework Confirmation Slip by _____ if you want credit.

REFERENCES

¹ Family-Planning Program, Public Health - Seattle & King County. (October 21, 2002) Section V. Feminine Hygiene. Clinical Practice Guidelines 2001.

² Family-Planning Program, Public Health - Seattle & King County. (March 10, 2005) Section III. Cervical Cancer Screening. Clinical Practice Guidelines 2001.

³ Family-Planning Program, Public Health - Seattle & King County. (October 21, 2002) Section V. Feminine Hygiene. Clinical Practice Guidelines 2001.

⁴ *ibid*

⁵ Tinea Infections: Athlete's Foot, Jock Itch and Ringworm (n.d.) Retrieved December 14, 2005 from the American Academy of Family Physicians' web site <http://familydoctor.org/316.xml>

⁶ Diseker, III RA; Peterman, TA; Kamb, ML; et al (2000) Circumcision and STD in the United States: cross sectional and cohort analyses. *Sexually Transmitted Infections* 76:474-479.

⁷ Benatar, M. and Benatar, D. (Spring, 2003) Between Prophylaxis and Child Abuse: The Ethics of Neonatal Male Circumcision. *American Journal of Bioethics*, 3(2), 45-48.

⁸ U.S. National Library of Medicine and the National Institutes of Health's Medline Plus (n.d.) *Circumcision*. Retrieved December 14, 2005 from <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/002998.htm>

⁹ Family-Planning Program, Public Health - Seattle & King County. (July 1, 2002) Section V. Menstrual Products. Clinical Practice Guidelines 2001.

¹⁰ *ibid*

¹¹ U.S. National Library of Medicine and the National Institutes of Health's Medline Plus (n.d.) Painful Menstrual Periods. Retrieved December 14, 2005 from <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/003150.htm>

¹² National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases, National Institutes of Health, Department of Health and Human Services (October, 2001) Questions and Answers About Acne.

¹³ *ibid*

¹⁴ *ibid*

¹⁵ *ibid*