



LIVING WELL NEWSLETTER

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North Yorkshire and York

FOCUS ON WOMEN'S HEALTH AND WELLBEING

PUBERTY

Puberty is a difficult time for all children. Children with learning disabilities may find it especially difficult as they may struggle to understand the changes that are happening, regulate their emotions and communicate with others how they are feeling. They may also find it difficult to understand what is appropriate and inappropriate.

Key messages for parents:

- Your child will go through puberty. Puberty is inevitable, so assume that your child will show changes relating to their gender and sexuality.
- Start thinking about puberty and how you will manage the changes as early as you can.
- We all have different beliefs and expectation about puberty. Think about what your family's beliefs and expectations are. Does this fit with your child's needs and abilities?
- Take a matter of fact approach (be neutral). Your child may not pick up on social cues or learn from peers about appropriate behaviour. Therefore you and other adults will be their source of information.
- Establish rules around hygiene as early as possible.
- Introduce the concept of public and private (spaces, body parts, behaviour).

This information is taken from Sheffield Children's NHS Trust. For more information visit their website [here](#). Please see the resources section at the end for links to relevant information and easy read materials on Puberty.



IMAGE FROM CHILDLINE

**PUBERTY IN YOUNG PEOPLE WITH
ASD AND/OR LEARNING
DISABILITIES VIDEO BELOW**



AUTISTIC WOMEN AND GIRLS

Autism can sometimes be different in girls and boys.

Autistic girls may:

- hide some signs of autism by copying how other children behave and play
- withdraw in situations they find difficult
- appear to cope better with social situations
- show fewer signs of repetitive behaviours

This means autism can be harder to spot in girls.

For more information and access to useful resources visit National Autistic Society website [here](#). Please see the resources section at the end for links to other relevant information and easy read materials.

ROSALIND'S STORY VIDEO BELOW



GIRLS WITH AUTISM: A CHANNEL 4 DOCUMENTARY VIDEO BELOW



LOVE AND RELATIONSHIPS

Relationships are very important to people with a learning disability.

- Although some people with a learning disability may not be able to consent to having sex or a relationship, this is the minority.
- Generally, if they are given sufficient social support and accessible sex and relationships education, many people with a learning disability are able to engage in safe, healthy and happy personal and sexual relationships.
- Many people with a learning disability have the same aspirations for loving relationships as those without a learning disability.
- The companionship that a partner provides is important to people with a learning disability.
- However, there are various barriers to people with a learning disability having the relationships they want. Many people with a learning disability are not given appropriate support needed to engage in loving and sexual relationships with others. (Public Health England)

This information is taken from the MENCAP website and original references have been removed. For more information and references visit their website [here](#). Please see the resources section at the end for links to relevant information and easy read materials.



IMAGES FROM MENCAP

'LOVE MAKES ME FEEL GOOD INSIDE AND MY HEART IS FIXED' VIDEO BELOW



MENOPAUSE

- Menopause, when a woman stops having periods, is a gradual process during which women experience perimenopause before reaching postmenopause.
- The average age of menopause in the UK is 51.
- Menopausal symptoms are extremely common. Hot flushes and night sweats are the most common symptoms reported by women living in the UK.
- In addition, many women report other symptoms which can include: sleep disturbance; depression and mood changes; musculoskeletal pain; and urogenital symptoms.
- Women with learning disabilities, and in particular women with Down syndrome, tend to have earlier menopause than other women.
- Level of knowledge about the menopause has been found to be generally low in women with learning disabilities.
- Carers report being poorly trained and resourced to help women understand the menopause and disentangling physical and psychological problems stemming from menopausal changes from changes in behaviours due to other causes. (Public Health England - Health Inequalities: Menopause)

Please see the resources section at the end for links to relevant information and easy read materials on menopause.



MY MENOPAUSE: A FILM BY SUFFOLK LIBRARIES AND ACE ANGLIA
VIDEO BELOW



HEALTH SCREENINGS

Cervical cancer screening (also known as the smear test) helps prevent cervical cancer. It detects abnormal changes to the cervix so they can be monitored or treated before they get a chance to turn into cervical cancer. Cervical screening should be offered to all women and people with a cervix aged 25 to 64.

Breast cancer screening is for women aged 50 and older. This is a free NHS test you can have to check your breasts. The test checks if your breasts are healthy. It can help find cancers that are too small to see or feel. Breast screening can save lives. It means more women can have treatment to deal with breast cancer.

NHS **bowel cancer screening** checks if you could have bowel cancer. It's available to everyone aged 60 to 74 years. The programme is expanding to make it available to everyone aged 50 to 59 years. You use a home test kit, called a faecal immunochemical test (FIT), to collect a small sample of poo and send it to a lab.

Please see the resources section at the end for links to relevant information and easy read materials on cancer screenings.

ACCESSING CERVICAL SCREENING WITH THE RIGHT SUPPORT FOR PEOPLE WITH A LEARNING DISABILITY
VIDEO BELOW



DO THE TEST GO FOR IT! TAKING THE FEAR OUT OF BREAST SCREENING
VIDEO BELOW



INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Puberty

- [Puberty in girls with learning disabilities – Sheffield Children’s NHS Foundation Trust. \(Easy Read in parts\).](#)
- [Puberty & Sexuality for Children and Young People – The Children’s Learning Disability Nursing Team. NHS Leeds.](#)
- [Puberty and Your Body – Childline.](#)
- [Menstruation – Mencap \(Easy Read\).](#)

Autistic Women and Girls

- [Autistic Women and Girls – National Autistic Society.](#)
- [Diagnosis for Women and Girls – Autism Central \(links to useful resources and groups\).](#)
- [Autistic Women, Pregnancy and Motherhood – National Autistic Society.](#)

Love and Relationships

- [Relationships and Sex Resource Pack – Pennine Care NHS Foundation Trust \(Easy Read\).](#)
- [Sex Education: A Guide for Parents – National Autistic Society.](#)
- [Relationships and sexuality in adult social care services Guidance for CQC inspection staff and registered adult social care providers – CQC](#)
- [Sexuality and Relationships – Mencap. \(links to useful accessible resources and videos\).](#)
- [Love Life: resources for young people with learning disabilities – NSPCC.](#)
- [Making Connections, Building Confidence: Dating Agencies for People with Learning Disabilities –University of Kent. \(Video\).](#)
- [Health Inequalities: Pregnancy and Birth \[Learning Disabilities\] – Public Health England](#)

INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Menopause

- [Menopause - Pennine Care NHS Foundation \(Easy Read\)](#)
- [Menopause - Mencap \(Easy Read\)](#)

Health Screenings

- [Gov.uk - Guidance: Supporting women with learning disabilities to access cervical screening](#)
- [Public Health England - Cervical screening: an easy guide](#)
- [Gov.uk - NHS population screening: information for trans and non-binary people](#)
- [Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust \(website contains easy read information and video clips\)](#)
- [Breast Screening - Pennine Care NHS Foundation \(Easy Read\)](#)
- [Bowel Cancer Screening: An Easy Read Guide - NHS](#)

Contact: If you have any queries about this newsletter or any of the topics raised here you can contact us on hnyicb-ny.mhld@nhs.net