DOWN'S SYNDROME WINTER NEWSLETTER

Puberty, adolescence and sexual health



Puberty and Girls

CYP with Down's Syndrome tend to have very similar time frames of puberty compared with CYP without DS. Girls with DS tend to get their periods slightly earlier, with a growth spurt at the start of their periods and a slight height increase after periods start.

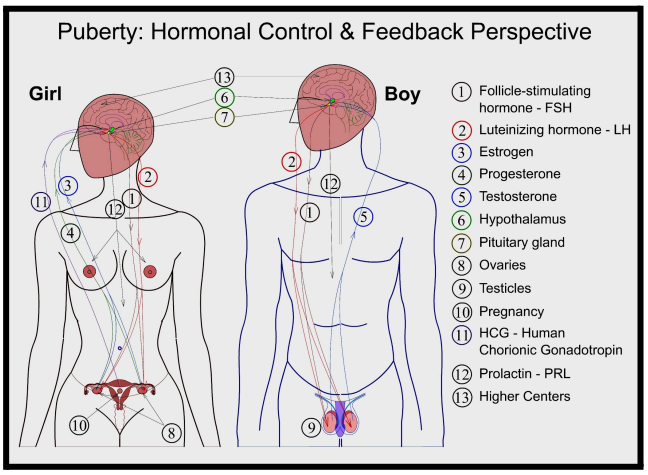
The average age of girls with DS to have her first period is around 12 years old. Most Parkside girls who are independent with toileting should also be able to cope with periods independently; but maybe need initial support from a female staff member.

It could be useful for classes to nominate a staff member to be a Downs Syndrome CYPs 'go to' through this time and a plan in place to support them through their first periods; whether emotionally or physically with using period products.

Communication with DS family/carers to support the CYP through their first period will help to make home/school consistent and therefore less anxiety inducing for the pupil.

It can take 1-2 years for periods to settle into a regular pattern

Puberty and boys



The timings and sequence of pubertal changes in boys with Down's Syndrome is similar to other boys. Thyroid problems which occur more commonly in CYP with Down's may affect timing of puberty, families are advised to contact their doctor if no signs of puberty by 14 or before aged 9.



Studies have shown that women with Downs Syndrome ovulate and approximately 70% are fertile. Men with Down's syndrome have lower fertility than the general population. Although there are no official statistics or studies tracking the number of babies fathered by men with Down Syndrome, a couple of cases have been reported so contraception should always be used unless a couple are planning a pregnancy.



The physical, hormonal and emotional effects of puberty can be a worrying time for a child if they don't know what to expect. We have some lovely resources in the cupboard in the corridor to Turtle which can be borrowed, a PSHE padlet and resources on the drive. Kirsty Lofty (Elephant class teacher) is also the school PSHE lead if you need pointing in the right direction for any further PSHE resources. Copy and paste the below link to the PSHE padlet.

https://padlet.com/kirstylofty/rshe-e-saftey-and-wellbeing-at-the-parkside-school-zp9n91t9h5noezhl

- Young people and adults with Down's have a right to:
- Fulfilling personal and sexual relationships
- To marry or cohabit
- To make informed choices about whether or not to have children
- To privacy and to be free from exploitation
- To receive sex education, including personal relationships, sex and sexuality, contraceptive advice and sexual health support services.

The Down's Syndrome Association website also has a lot of support with regards to Puberty and Sexual health, (see link below). They run courses and have a helpline for parents and carers to access. Other important areas they cover with regards to puberty include:

- Consent
- Privacy and boundaries
- Healthy relationships
- Sexuality and gender

www.downs-syndrome.org.uk/about-downs-syndrome/health-and-wellbeing/sexual-health

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