



### **Talking Points: Puberty Body Care Cards**

Some of these body care items might be familiar and some might not - here is more information about all of the body care items, to guide conversations with youth.

These cards can help understand the changes that someone might experience during puberty. Below are talking points about all the body care items, in alphabetical order.

Some of these items are geared toward supporting trans youth. Puberty can be a difficult time for anyone, and can be particularly tricky for trans youth. As people's bodies are growing and changing, some children experience gender dysphoria about their bodies. A child may start growing breasts, only to realize they don't want breasts. Having breasts may feel uncomfortable or "not like the real me." Being unable to stop their body from changing in a way they don't want can be challenging to deal with. And that's on top of the other common emotional ups and downs of puberty. Luckily, there are plenty of tools to help trans youth feel happier and more confident about their bodies.

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### **Acne Face Wash:**

There are many kinds of acne face washes on the market. With all face washes, it is recommended to start using the wash once every few days, and then more often, so the skin can get used to it. Always follow up with moisturizer. Use sunscreen in the daytime.

Popular ingredients in acne face washes:

- Benzoyl Peroxide: Works against the bacteria that causes acne. Non-prescription products can contain up to 10% of this active ingredient; usually, products have 10%, 5%, or 2.5%. While higher percentages might seem more effective, there is no scientific evidence supporting this, and they may increase skin irritation. Benzoyl peroxide is not recommended for sensitive skin, as even lower percentages can be drying or irritating.
- Salicylic Acid: This exfoliant is beneficial for those with oily skin, helping to clear clogged pores and minimize breakouts. The highest percentage for most over-the-counter products is 2%. If one has sensitive skin, they should look for a face wash with a lower percentage, like 1% or 0.5%.

- Glycolic Acid: Another exfoliant that can be less irritating/drying than salicylic acid. It can also soothe redness from stressed skin. Percentages higher than 10% can be irritating, so one should look for products with smaller percentages.
- Tea Tree: Tea tree fights acne-causing bacteria, similar to benzoyl peroxide (but not as effective), and soothes sensitive red skin.

(Note: If someone chooses to use an acne scrub, they should follow the instructions on the product regarding frequency of use. It is important to not rub the face hard, as this will irritate the skin and likely worsen acne. Instead, gently massage the scrub into the skin for about a minute, and then wash off. Aggressive use of facial scrubs can damage skin.)

### **Bra:**

An item of clothing worn to support breasts. May or may not have an underwire: a wire at the bottom of the bra that helps with support and shaping of breasts. Bras can come in many styles, such as bralettes (no padding or underwire, usually for smaller breasts), sports bras (extra support and breathability), push up bras (meant to make breasts sit higher on the chest, usually have underwire), and more. It is important to be properly measured to ensure wearing the correct sized bra. Wearing a bra with the incorrect cup or band size can be uncomfortable, or not look as desired.

### **Bra Padding:**

Many bras come with thin foam pads already in the bra, in order to shield sensitive skin and make breasts look smoother. There are also types of thicker pads that can be inserted into bras to make breasts look bigger and sit higher on the chest. Those who don't have breasts can use padding to fill out a bra to look like they do have breasts. This is helpful for transfeminine people or drag performers who don't have breasts. Bras can make people happier in their body, feel like their real self, or just complete an outfit.

**Brush/Comb:**

Used to prevent hair from being tangled and help to style hair. Many different brushes are available, chosen according to hair type and desired style. Those with short or thin hair may prefer to use a comb or just their fingers to brush/style their hair.

**Chest Binder:**

Stretchy, tight fabric that compresses breasts to create the look of a flat chest. They come in styles that are pulled on like a shirt, have clasps, or have zippers. They can also come in a variety of skin tones, colors, and patterns. It is very important to measure the chest and shoulders correctly in order to order the correct size. Brands selling binders will have a sizing chart to determine which size binder to get. Too small binders can cause pain, difficulty breathing, and if worn for a long time can permanently damage the ribs. Binders should not be worn during exercise, to bed, or for longer than 8 hours at a time.

Anyone can wear a binder regardless of their gender. Some people just like the look of a flat chest or the feeling of compression, while others wear binders because they have gender dysphoria. They feel their body doesn't match the gender they feel they are on the inside. If they are born as girls, but feel that they are a boy or nonbinary, they can bind to look and feel more like their real selves. Not every transmasculine person wears a binder, or dislikes their breasts; everyone is different and these are all just tools to help people feel more comfortable and happier being themselves.

**Deodorant:**

During puberty our body chemistry changes and we sweat and smell more. Deodorant works to stop body odor. Antiperspirant deodorant stops sweat and body odor. Both can come unscented or scented. Antiperspirant deodorant may be irritating for those with sensitive skin. Comes in stick, cream, gel, and spray form.

### **Feminizing Hormone Replacement Therapy:** (Estrogen or “E”)

Estrogen is involved in many of the physical and emotional changes seen during puberty for people with ovaries. People whose bodies don't produce much estrogen might take estrogen for medical reasons. People who are transgender might take estrogen to create the physical changes estrogen produces: increase in breast tissue, less body hair, more body fat around hips and thighs, less scalp balding. Estrogen may be given as a pill, by injection, or by a number of skin preparations such as a gel, spray or a patch. There are four areas where changes can occur as hormone therapy progresses: physical, emotional, sexual, and reproductive. The way the body changes in response to hormones is more dependent on genetics and the age at which it is started, rather than the specific dose, route, frequency, or types of medications taken.

### **Lotion:**

Moisturizer can come in a thick cream for extra dry or sensitive skin, a runnier lotion for average skin, or a gel for oily skin. Even oily skin needs moisturizer! Drying out an oily face makes the skin produce even MORE oil because it needs the moisture. The main purpose of lotion is to keep skin hydrated, soft, and smooth. Many moisturizers have ingredients to target specific skin concerns, such as:

- Oat, honey, aloe, ceramides, and petroleum jelly for sensitive skin.
- Exfoliating acids (lactic acid, salicylic acid, glycolic acid, and urea) for rough, bumpy skin.
- Glycerin, hyaluronic acid, shea butter, squalene, and vitamin E for dry skin.
- Niacinamide, vitamin C, and azelaic acid for skin with post-acne dark spots.

### **Masculinizing Hormone Replacement Therapy:** (Testosterone or “T”)

Some people who are trans might take hormone replacement therapy to help feel better in their skin. Some cis men also take hormones for health reasons. When taking hormones one may notice a change in how they smell, their skin feeling rougher, slight changes in the shape of their face, getting hot more easily, being more sweaty, or being more/less emotional. Taking masculinizing hormones lessens the intensity of periods,

and how often one has them. Periods can also go away completely. One is still fertile and able to become pregnant while taking masculinizing hormones.

Taking Hormone Replacement Therapy in the form of a shot allows for a higher level of masculinizing hormones than the other options. Wearing a patch or using a gel is less effective, but still elevates the masculinizing hormones in the body, so the wanted changes are still likely to happen. Shots are done every week, while patches/gel are used every day. There is also an option to implant testosterone pellets under the skin, that slowly release testosterone into the body over a period of a few months. This is more invasive and expensive than the other options, but eliminates the hassle of a weekly shot or daily patch/gel.

If someone stops taking masculinizing hormones, they will still have a deep voice, and more body hair (though it might lessen). Their period will come back, and their body may return to a more curvy shape with less muscle.

### **Menstrual cup:**

A cup made of soft flexible plastic meant to collect period fluid. To use, the cup is folded so it's narrow and inserted into the vagina. To remove, the bottom of the cup is pinched (some cups have a stem or loop to grab onto) and pulled. The cup is then emptied into the toilet, cleaned with mild soap and periodically sterilized by boiling it for 5 to 10 minutes.



**Menstrual Pad:**

Pads are available in many different sizes and thicknesses for comfort. Certain brands also have scented pads. The sticky side of the pad sticks to the inside of underwear, so the soft side can soak up any fluid. The “wings” on menstrual pads are meant to be folded to stick to the underside of the underwear once the pad is placed. This gives the pad a stronger hold on the cloth and helps it stay in place better. Menstrual pads should only be worn during a period, as wearing them constantly can cause a yeast infection. When one goes to the bathroom, the pad should be removed, wrapped in toilet paper, and thrown in the garbage. Pads need to be changed every 3-4 hours during the day.

**Packer:**

Often transmasculine people use a packer because they experience gender dysphoria. Not having the bulge in their underwear that a penis and testicals create makes them feel sad and unhappy in their body. Packers are often made of squishy silicone and shaped like a penis and testicles. They come in many different skin tones, sizes, and levels of realism. They can also be made of cloth or foam. For those who don't want a realistic penis, there are smooth foam inserts that simply create the look of a bulge. There is special underwear made to hold packers, called packing underwear. There are also cloth pouches or harnesses that help hold the packer in place when worn with normal underwear.

**Period Underwear:**

More eco friendly than single products such as tampons and pads. The underwear is especially made to soak up period blood without feeling wet or uncomfortable, then be washed and reused. There are also brands that make period underwear in the style of boxer briefs and packing underwear.

**Puberty Blockers:**

Medication prescribed by a doctor that pauses puberty. They are used in various circumstances: when a small child starts to experience puberty too early, when a child is exploring their gender and wants to put off the permanent changes of puberty until they know if they want to take hormones or not, or when a child knows they want to take hormones and wants to put off the permanent changes of puberty while they go through the process of being prescribed those hormones. Puberty continues as normal when someone stops taking the puberty blockers. Puberty blocks can be a shot or implant placed under the skin.

**Safety Razor/Shaving Cream:**

Used to shave hair down to the skin, leaving a smooth look. A razor can be used on all body hair. There are razors made specifically for shaving the face - the head of the razor is slightly flexible to fit the curves on the chin and jaw. When shaving, don't push the razor into the skin, as that can cause cuts. Shave gently, and replace the blades of the razor every month to make sure they're always sharp. Dull blades are more likely to cause cuts. Some razors have the blades permanently attached to the handle, and the whole thing must be thrown away when the blades get dull. Using a razor with replaceable blades can save money and cut down on waste.

Shaving cream allows the razor to glide across the skin without catching on the skin, which can cause irritation. It can be applied by hand if it's in cream, foam, or gel form. Wet shaving brushes must be used on shaving bars to get a good lather, and then apply the lather to the face. Shaving cream can also be used on the rest of the body, such as the legs. It comes in many different scents or scent-less.

**Shampoo/Conditioner:**

Shampoo cleans the scalp and hair. It prevents the build up of oil, dead skin cells, and hair products and stops the scalp from feeling itchy and irritated. Different shampoos can help with many different scalp needs; such as moisturizing ingredients for dry



scalps, salicylic acid for oily, flaky scalps, and special medication for scalps with psoriasis, eczema, or dermatitis. There are many scents to choose from.

Conditioner creates an unnoticeable coating on the strands of the hair to make it more smooth and less likely to tangle. Don't apply it to the scalp and hair close to the head, like with shampoo. Instead put conditioner on the ends of the hair. Many people with short hair don't need to use conditioner since they cut their hair before it can collect much damage. Some conditioner is meant to be left in the hair for a few minutes before being thoroughly washed out. If this type of conditioner isn't washed out of the hair, it may feel greasy. Some conditioner, especially for curly hair, is left in to help shape the curls. Conditioner also comes in many different scents.

### **Soap/Body Wash:**

Build up of dirt, sweat, and dead skin cells can cause body acne. Regularly washing the skin fights against pimples and body odor. Bar soap is more eco-friendly than liquid soap, but can be harsher on skin depending on how it's made. Look for bar soap labeled "gentle," "for sensitive skin," or "Low pH".

Avoid any soap labeled "antibacterial" as using antibacterial soaps for long periods of time can make bacteria evolve to not be bothered by antibacterial products anymore. Antibacterial soap is more likely to be irritating as well.

Soaps can help tackle skin concerns. Look for soaps calling themselves "hydrating" or "moisturizing" for dry skin, "unfragranced" for sensitive skin, or "exfoliating" for rough/bumpy skin, or body acne. There are also deodorant soaps to keep body odor away.

### **Sports bra:**

This is a kind of bra made to give breasts more support, so running or jumping is more comfortable. Smaller cup sizes usually are made of tight, stretchy fabric that don't have bra clasps; they are pulled on like a shirt. The tight fabric keeps breasts in place during

activity. Breasts might look squished or flat in these sports bras. Larger cup sizes may want to get a sports bra with even more support; looking for a sports bra with an underwire can help when it comes to larger breast sizes. These bras often come with clasps like a regular bra. Going to a specialized bra boutique to be measured can be really helpful.

### **Stand-To-Pee:**

This tool allows people with a vulva to pee standing up. It can be used on camping trips where toilets are hard to find, or everyday with toilets/urinals. It also helps those with gender dysphoria to feel more comfortable in their bodies. If a person was labeled a girl, but feels they are a boy, being able to pee standing up like other boys can help them feel happy. For those who also want a packer, there are packers that also help people stand to-pee.

### **Tampon:**

Tampons absorb menstrual fluid while inside the vagina, preventing it from leaking onto underwear. Some tampons come in a plastic applicator. The applicator is inserted into the vagina, the plunger is pushed down to release the tampon, and then the applicator is removed. The tampon has a long string attached for easy removal when it's time to change it. It's safe to urinate while wearing a tampon, as urine exits the body through the urethra, which is separate from the vagina. When removing a tampon, it should be wrapped in toilet paper and discarded in the garbage. Tampons should not be flushed down the toilet, even if the packaging claims they are flushable. Tampons can clog toilets and cause plumbing problems. Only urine, feces, and toilet paper should be flushed. When changing tampons, the old tampon must be removed before inserting a new one. Tampons should be changed at least every four hours, or more frequently if menstrual flow is heavy.

**Trimmer:**

This is an electric version of a razor. It's less likely to cause cuts , and doesn't require shaving cream. It can irritate particularly sensitive skin. Can be used on all body parts. Runs on batteries or need to be plugged in.

**Tucking underwear:**

Tucking underwear can be worn to flatten the bulge caused by a penis and testicles, or while someone is "tucking." Tucking is when a person "tucks" their penis and testicles back up against their perineum, keeping them there with tucking underwear, or special tape to make the groin area look more like a vulva. It's important not to tuck for longer than 8 hours and to make sure to use tucking underwear that isn't too tight. Most websites selling tucking underwear will have a size chart to help choose the right size.

Anyone can tuck or wear tucking underwear. Some people like the flatter look it gives their crotches, while others find the feeling of tucking comforting. Some people might tuck because they feel gender dysphoria, which is when a person feels their body doesn't match the gender they feel they are on the inside. If they were labeled boys, but feel that they are a girl or nonbinary, they can tuck to look and feel more like their real selves. It's important to remember that not every transfeminine person tucks or dislikes their penis. Everyone is unique and these are all tools to help people feel more comfortable and happier being themselves.

## **Glossary**

### **Transmasculine**

A person born with a vulva and vagina/whose assigned sex at birth is female, who feels they are not a girl inside. An umbrella term to refer to trans men and nonbinary people whose gender is masculine, but not necessarily male.

### **Transfeminine**

A person born with a penis and testicles/whose assigned sex at birth is male, who feels they are not a boy inside. An umbrella term to refer to trans women and nonbinary people whose gender is feminine, but not necessarily female.

### **Cisgender/Cis**

A person who feels their gender matches the sex they were assigned at birth. A person who is not trans.

### **Assigned Sex at Birth**

Label of “male” or “female” given at birth, based on genitals, chromosomes, and/or hormones.