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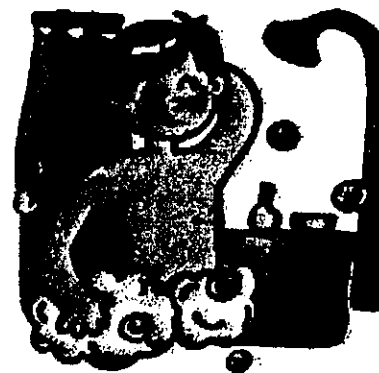
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Personal Hygiene

By Jennifer Kenny

Mrs. Horton was a health teacher in the middle school. She covered all kinds of topics during the year but in the springtime she always began what she thought was her most practical unit—personal hygiene.

What is **personal hygiene**? It refers to all the things a person does to stay healthy and keep clean. Does that sound too simple for middle school? It might, but it is really not. Why? Middle-schoolers are beginning puberty. Puberty is the time in a person's life that an individual's body goes from a child's body to an adult's body. During puberty, your body is changing so maybe your personal hygiene needs to as well.



When Mrs. Horton's students came to class, she was used to the snickers and giggles. The children thought they knew too much and that this topic was silly. She didn't care. She started with the basics. She wanted each student to feel comfortable. She knew that the tips she offered could save a lot of embarrassment in the future.

"What kinds of changes does puberty bring?" Mrs. Horton asked.

"Oily skin," Matthew said.

"Oily hair," Phyllis said.

"Sweaty armpits," Bo said.

"Good answers," Mrs. Horton said. "Lots of other changes, too. They are all a part of growing up. Are any of you worried about those changes?"

Two students in the front raised their hands. They were the brave ones! Then the rest of the class joined in. Of course, they were concerned. That's perfectly normal.

"Let's spend this class discussing the real practical stuff," Mrs. Horton said. "We've already discussed in a previous class how hormones contribute to the creation of acne. Acne is that skin condition that blocks the oil glands and creates pimples. Hormones also cause the sebaceous glands to make extra oil. This extra oil can make the hair appear too shiny or oily. What should you do?"

Mrs. Horton continued, "Wash your hair each day. Use warm water and shampoo. Lather. Rinse. Use a conditioner. Now when it comes to styling, I know you all use many wonderful products. However, promise me you will look closely. Make sure you are not adding extra grease to your hair."

"What about the extra sweat I feel?" Jack asked.

"That's a great question," Mrs. Horton said. "That's also perfectly normal. During puberty, your sweat glands become more active. They secrete chemicals with stronger odors. Have you noticed sweaty armpits, or feet, or private areas? Did you ever notice me open an extra window in the classroom?" Mrs. Horton smiled. The students giggled.

"Shower every day. Wash away the smelly bacteria. Use soap. Use water. Make sure your clothes are clean. It will make an incredible difference for you and the rest of us - I promise!" Mrs. Horton said.

"What about deodorant?" Audra asked.

"Good question," Mrs. Horton said. "First of all, if you sweat a lot, cotton clothes might help. Second of all,

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know what a deodorant and antiperspirant do. Get a deodorant with an antiperspirant. A deodorant covers up the smell. An antiperspirant dries up perspiration. They come in sticks, roll-ons, gels, sprays, and creams. Find one you are comfortable with."

"What about shaving, Mrs. Horton?" Philip asked. "Am I old enough?"

"That's a question I want you to discuss with your parents. To shave or not is a personal decision. You might opt to use a traditional razor or an electric razor. Be careful. Go slow!" Mrs. Horton said.

The bell rang. Mrs. Horton heard quite a few thank you's on the way out. It had been an insightful class.

Personal Hygiene

Questions

- _____ 1. Hygiene refers to the smell of body odor.
A. True
B. False
- _____ 2. Puberty is the time when a body changes from child to adult.
A. True
B. False
- _____ 3. Oily skin and hair is common during puberty.
A. False
B. True
- _____ 4. Acne refers to a mental condition.
A. False
B. True
- _____ 5. Styling products may add extra grease to your hair.
A. False
B. True
- _____ 6. A deodorant with an antiperspirant can help dry up sweat and cover the odor.
A. True
B. False
- _____ 7. Showering once a week should be enough to keep away body odor.
A. True
B. False

