

A booklet about growing  
up for young people  
with Down's syndrome.

# Let's talk about puberty



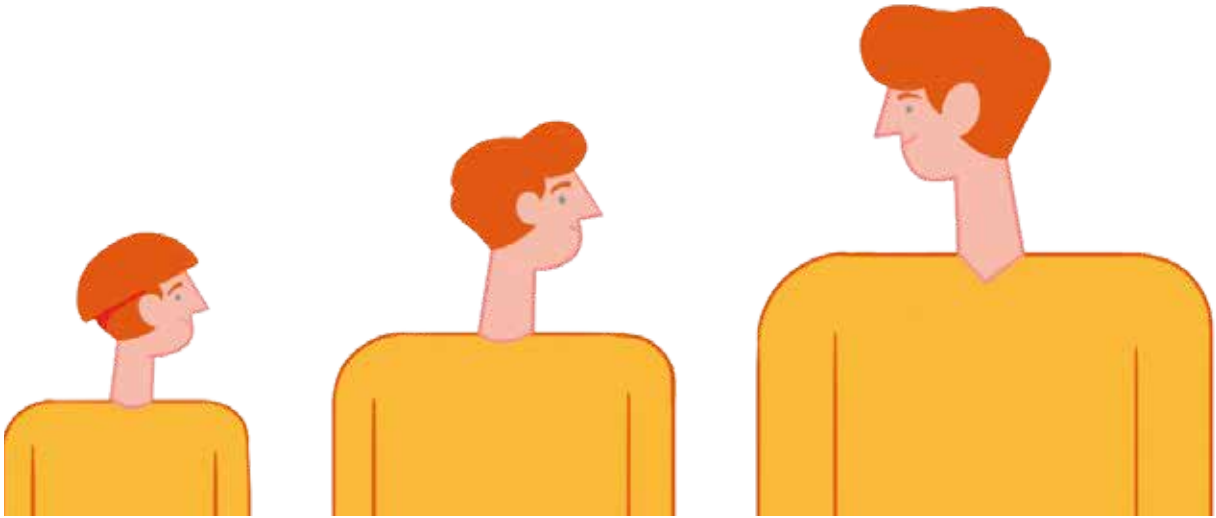
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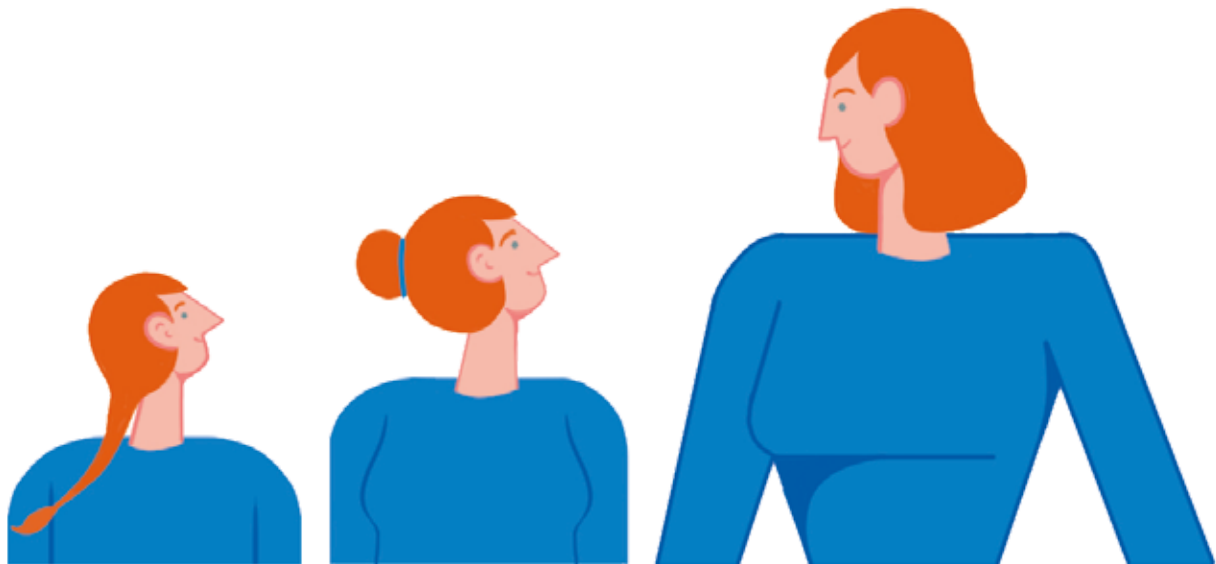
**This booklet will tell you about what happens to your body as you grow up. This is called puberty.**

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# What is puberty?



It takes a long time for children to grow up and become adults. Very slowly, your body shape will change until you are a man or a woman. The time it takes for your body to change is called Puberty.



Some of the changes are different for girls and boys.

# Changes for girls

## Hair

You will start to grow hair under your arms, on your legs and on your pubic area. At first the hair is fine and soft. As you get older it will become thicker. Many women shave the hair under their arms.

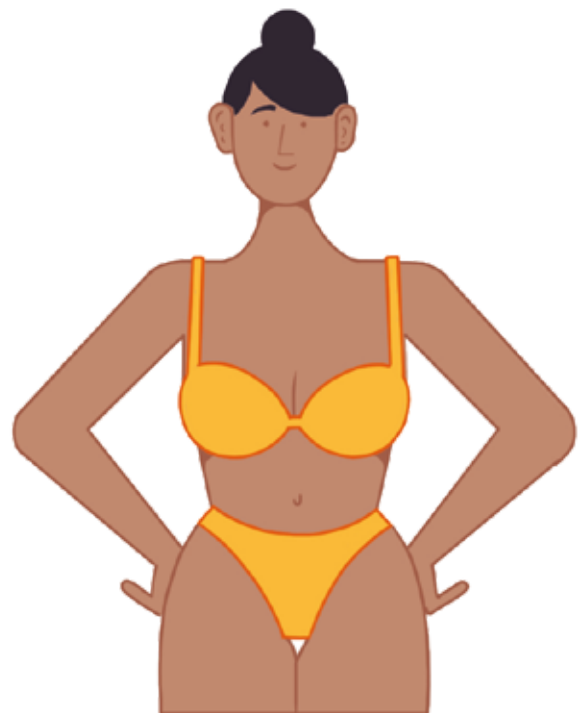


## Growing Taller

At first girls tend to grow faster than boys but you will stop growing before a boy does. This is why men are usually taller than women.

## Breasts

You will start to grow breasts. At first you will see small bumps under your nipples. Over time your breasts will keep growing and will show underneath your clothes. You will need to start wearing a bra. A bra will support your breasts and make you feel comfortable.





## Periods

Most girls start having periods between the ages of 11 and 14. Don't worry if your periods start before or after these ages. Your period happens when the egg from your ovary has not been fertilised and it dissolves in your womb.

The blood lining your womb which has built up during the month is no longer needed. This is what you see during your period. The blood comes out through your vagina, between your legs.

You will need to wear either a sanitary towel or a tampon to stop the blood from staining your clothes.

Periods last between 4 and 7 days. At first you may only have a period every once in a while but in time your period will become more regular.

Before your period you may feel more upset about things. Your breasts may feel sore. Your tummy may be swollen. These things are normal and will go away once your period starts.

No one else can tell that you are having your period. It is private. You can tell your parents or close friends but other people do not need to know.

# Changes for boys

## Hair

You will start to grow hair on your face, your pubic area, under your arms and on your legs and sometimes on your chest. At first the hair will be fine. As you get older the hair will be thicker. Most men shave the hair on their necks and faces. If you do not shave this area you will grow a beard and moustache.

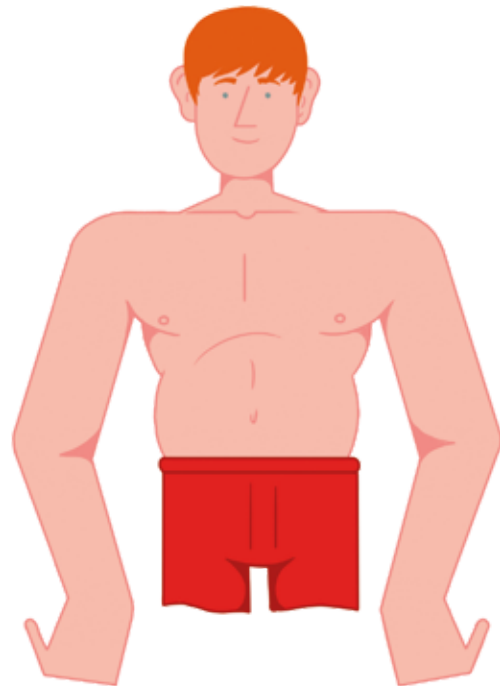


## Voice

Your voice will become deeper. Some young men sound croaky for a while, this is because their voice is changing. Other young men find that their voice has become deeper overnight.

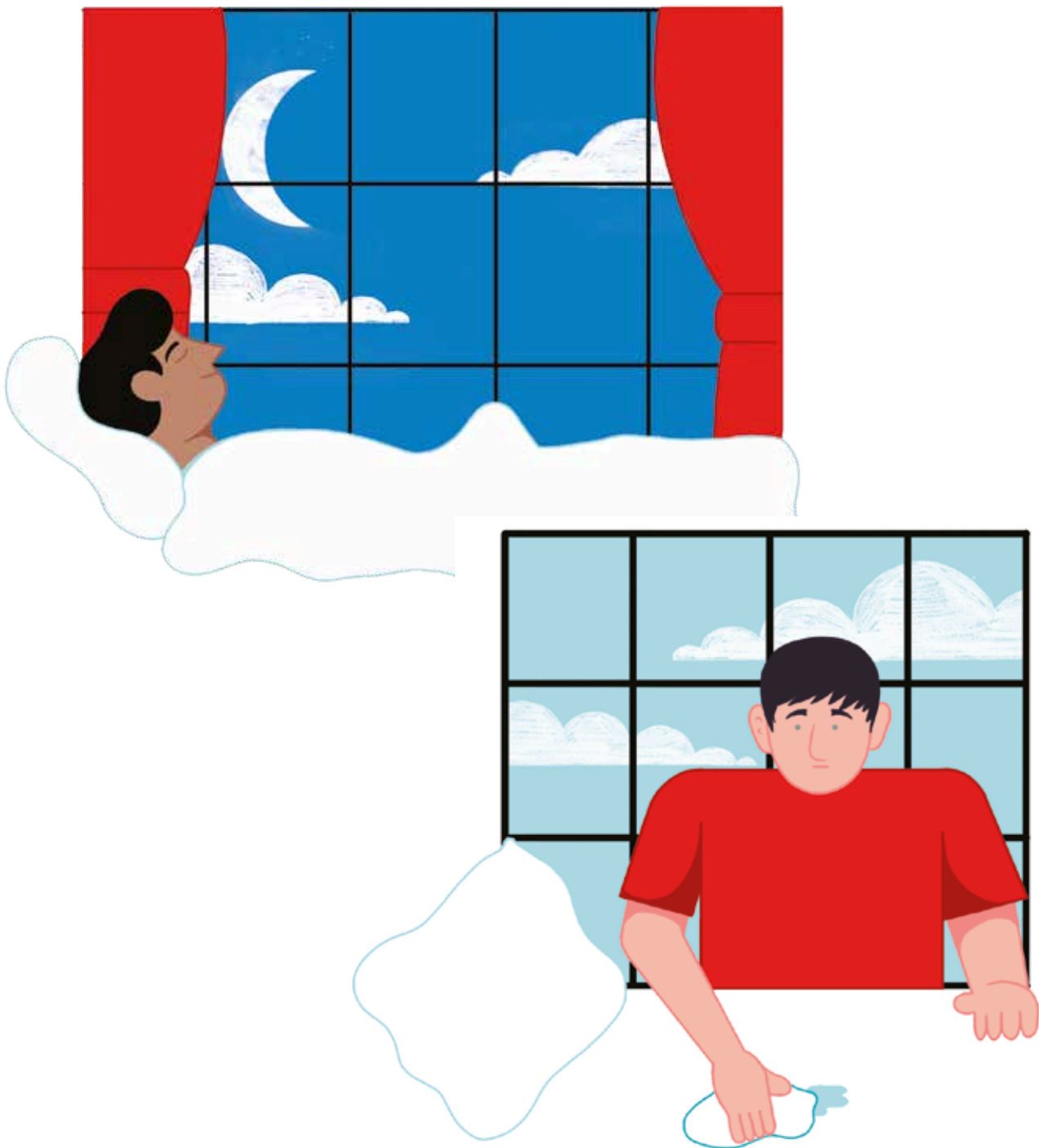
## Penis

As you get older, your penis will get longer and thicker. Your testicles (balls) will also get bigger. You will have more erections. This is when the penis becomes stiff and hard. Erections can happen in public places and you may feel embarrassed. Try to think about something else and the erection will go away.



## Growing Taller

You will grow taller and become heavier. You will notice that you start to develop muscles and put on weight.



## Wet Dreams

When you are asleep and dreaming, you will get erections and ejaculate. This is when semen shoots out through the erect penis. You will not be aware that this is happening because you are asleep. You will wake up and feel a damp patch in your bed. Keep some tissues by your bed so that you can wipe it up. All young men have wet dreams, it is normal and nothing to worry about.



## Sweat

Your sweat glands begin to work and you will sweat more. Make sure that you have a bath, shower or wash at the sink regularly. Use a deodorant under your arms when you are clean.



## Greasy Hair

To keep your hair clean, wash it everyday using a mild shampoo so that your hair does not become too dry.



## Spots

Most people get spots when they are growing up. Wash your face every day to keep the skin clean and try not to touch a spot if you get one.





# For girls and boys... mood swings



**Mood swings affect all young people. They are caused by hormones.**

Mood swings mean that one day you may feel great, the next day you feel angry and the day after that you feel very sad. Sometimes you can have all of these feelings in one day! Mood swings are hard to cope with. You may find it hard to say the right thing. You may find it hard to do the right thing.

## What are hormones?

Hormones are chemicals that are made by the glands in the body. Hormone levels rise and fall at different times depending on our body's need. When hormones are rising and falling it can change the way you feel. This is what gives you mood swings.

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# Self image



Firstly, you have to come to terms with the changes to your body. Many young people find something about their body that they don't like. This is normal and is nothing to worry about. As time passes you will feel more comfortable.

Taking care of your appearance can help you feel more confident.



# Independence



As you get older you will also want to do more things for yourself. You will want to go out with your own friends. You should try to learn to be more responsible for yourself. This means making sure that you are safe and not getting into trouble.

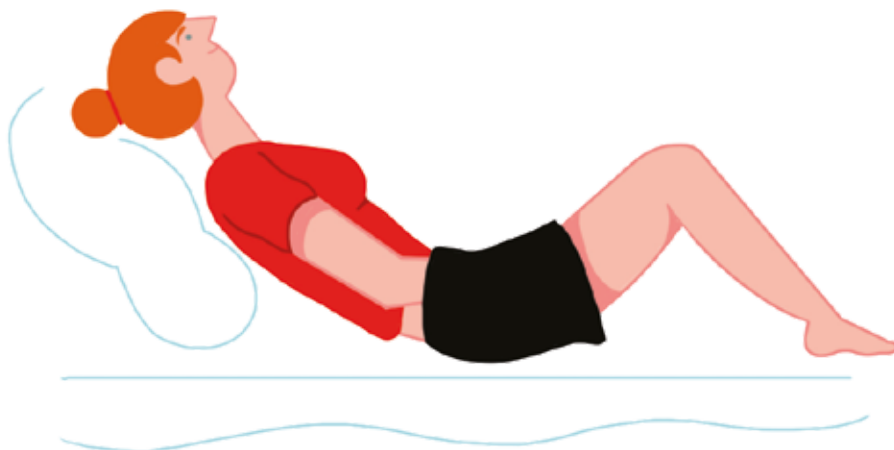
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# Sexual feelings

The reason that you go through puberty is so that your body is ready to make babies when you get older, if you want to. As changes happen you will also get new sensations which feel nice.



Boys will get more erections. You will want to touch parts of your body because it feels nice. This is normal. Remember that it is private and don't do it in front of anyone else.

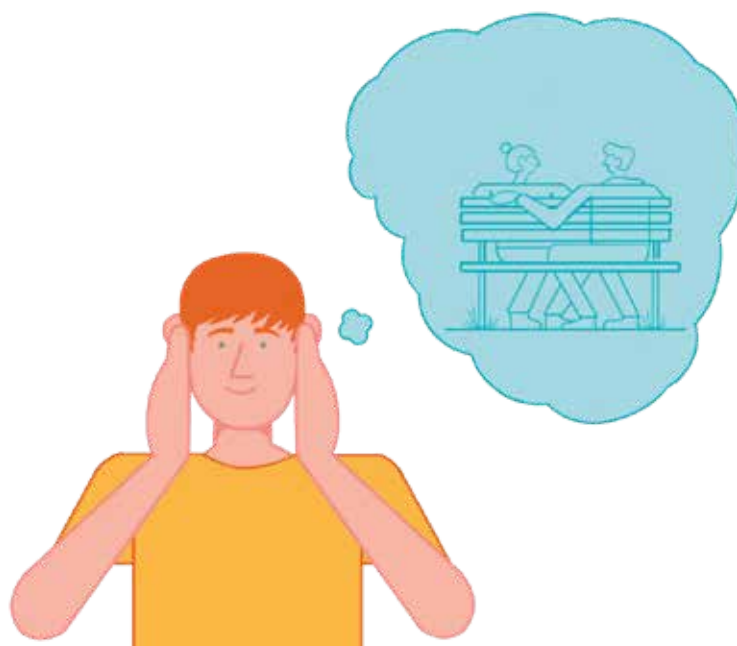


# Fancying people

You will start to feel differently about people. You might fancy someone and cannot stop thinking about them.



You will daydream about being with that person even if you know really that you will never meet them. Lots of young people feel this way about pop stars.



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# Growing up is cool

When you have been reading this booklet, some of the things may have seemed scary. You might wish that you did not have to grow up and go through puberty.

Remember, the changes do not all happen at the same time and you will cope with each thing as it comes along. There are lots of great things about being an adult.

You can choose how to spend your spare time

You can make your own decisions and choices

You might want your own home

You can have a relationship

You can choose how to spend your money





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# **This booklet is in an easy read format. It is advisable that family/carers/friends read the book and discuss the content with the person.**

Down's Syndrome Scotland provides support to families, carers and professionals who care for people with Down's syndrome.

If you would like to access further support please call us on 0300 030 2121.

For further information visit: [www.dsscotland.org.uk](http://www.dsscotland.org.uk)




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