

# MATURATION ISSUES

## FEMALE

As your student gets older she will soon begin experiencing menstruation. This sometimes presents new challenges and concerns for families and caregivers. As part of your student's self care routines, she may be encouraged to partially participate in some of these care activities. Visual cues for toileting and other self-care routines are available through the Attainment Company.

The following are some **strategies** that some teams have used.

- Reference to body parts can be made through the use of charts or when dealing with personal care activities with the student. Reinforcement of **consistent language** is very important.
- Some spray products are available, which can help neutralize odours and are safe to spray on the skin. This can be helpful to **minimize offensive odours** when changing diapers during periods. Your local occupational therapist may have some suggestions for purchase of locally available products.
- Some teams have chosen to integrate the student for any/all visual activities, which their peers may be exposed to in learning situations, (e.g., films, filmstrips, etc.). Discussion groups are often avoided if it is felt that the student would not understand the conversations. However, the **visual reinforcement** may assist the student in pairing this activity with the actual activity s/he is involved with.
- Some hospital support groups and child development centres may provide training packages or workshops for parents regarding challenges around maturation for teens. If such programs do not exist in your area, perhaps parents of special needs children could lobby their local agencies to research this area and possibly develop such resources for the future.

Some **References** for your team to consider include:

- The **Sexual Health Resource Network** through **Sunnyhill** at **1-800-331-1533** for a bibliography of books, videos and other resources available on loan to parents or individuals working with special needs students regarding issues of sexuality and maturation. You may also contact them through the following website: <http://www.sunnyhill.ca>
- Book: "**Recognition & Appropriate Expression Of Eight Basic Emotions - For Teens & Young Adults With Mental Disabilities**" by Dr. Rosemary Moskal

- Website Article: Relationships & Boundaries.  
<http://www.cw.bc.ca/library/pdf/Topics Oct05.pdf>
- Book: "I Openers - Parents Ask Questions About Sexuality And Children With Developmental Disabilities", by Dave Hingsburger. Published by Family Support Institute Press, #300 - 30 East 6th Ave., Vancouver, B.C. Can. V5T 4P4
- "Understanding & Expressing Sexuality: Responsible Choices for Individuals With Developmental Disabilities", by Rosalyn Kramer Monat-Haller. Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co. P.O. Box 10624, Baltimore, Maryland 21285-0624
- "Changing Inappropriate Sexual Behavior", A Community-Based Approach for Persons with Developmental Disabilities. By Dorothy M. Friffins, Vernon L. Quinsey, & Davis Hingsburger. Paul Brookes Pub.
- "Just Between Us"

Some contacts in Victoria, B.C. include:

- Bev Kissinger with the Victoria Association for Community Living at 477-7231,
- The Child Abuse Prevention & Counseling Society of Greater Victoria (Mary Manning Centre), 730 Quadra St., Victoria, B.C. V8V 4Z5; Phone: 250-385-6111; FAX: 250-486-8111
- Alice Richards, Counselor, Private Practice - 1-250-480-0331; works just with special needs clients regarding sexual safety & prevention skills; deals directly with clients regarding sexual issues & sexual abuse issues.