Lesson Six

Title: Feeling good in your skin

Theme: Developing a positive body image

Time: 115 minutes

Materials:
- “Ideal Femininity” and “Ideal Masculinity” Charts
- Nutrition - Station Work
- Physical Activity - Station Work
- Female Advertisement - Station Work
- Male Advertisement - Station Work
- Tips For Healthy Eating And Keeping A Positive Body Image – Handout
- Hip To Hygiene - Quiz
- Hygiene Hints - Handout
- Body Matters Reflective Writing - Homework Assignment

Objectives

- to teach students about the concept of body image
- to acknowledge the links between physical changes during puberty and body image
- to discuss the reasons it is important to have a positive body image
- to challenge stereotypes of “ideal femininity” and “ideal masculinity”
- to allow students to discuss body image issues in mixed-gender groups
- to reinforce the importance of proper nutrition and adequate physical activity
- to decipher reasonable personal hygiene practices from those that are media-influenced and unnecessary

Curriculum Expectations

4p5 - outline factors that influence body shape and size (e.g., heredity, diet, exercise)

5p7 - describe the influence of the media on body image (e.g., shape and size)

5p8 - explain how changes in our bodies sometimes affect our eating habits (e.g., increased appetite during growth spurts)

5p13 - describe the increasing importance of personal hygiene following puberty

6p1 - explain how body image and self-esteem influence eating practices
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4MAT Quadrants

3R: Common Sense Learning, Applying Ideas, Skills and Knowledge

Background Information

This lesson focuses on the issues young people face surrounding body image. During puberty, as their bodies mature, children form new ideas about themselves in relation to their peers, people in the media and their family members. They are bombarded with images of ideal femininity and ideal masculinity that are unattainable for most people. Preteens grow up in a culture that promotes a thin and beautiful body for women, and a lean and muscular body for men. They are exposed to unhealthy messages about beauty, exercise, body shape and dieting.

While no person is immune from developing eating disorders, girls are at an increased risk. In Canada, the vast majority of people suffering from eating disorders are women. Recent studies, including one conducted in the Region of Peel, show that up to 80 percent of teenage girls feel dissatisfied with their bodies. This situation reflects the particularly harsh standards to which women are compared. Negative relationships with their bodies lead many women to unhealthy consequences including binge-eating, depression, fatigue, poor concentration, social withdrawal and low self-esteem.

Girls and boys who develop eating disorders can suffer from hair loss, problems with their liver and pancreas, digestive and intestinal problems, damaged teeth, dehydration, diabetes, stroke, cardiac arrest or suicide. Boys are also facing increasing pressure to conform to unrealistic standards of masculinity. As the pressure for boys to develop muscular physiques rises, the use of steroids in boys also increases. Potential side effects of steroid use are liver damage, hepatitis C, shrinkage of the testicles, acne and increased aggressive behaviour.
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This lesson is designed to introduce students to the concept of body image and to make them more aware of the factors influencing their views of their bodies. By focussing on the ways girls and boys can care for their bodies, this lesson allows teachers to stress the importance of healthy eating, active living and proper hygiene.

Procedure

Activity One: Class Discussion Regarding Body Image - 30 minutes

Ask students to move their desks into groups of four. Be sure that each group includes both girls and boys. Have the children turn their desks towards the chalkboard. Tell the students that they will be listening to you lead a discussion and working on a series of tasks in their small groups periodically throughout this lesson. As you lead the discussion, pause to let students work together at each “Group Task”.

Here are some ideas you may use to guide your discussion.

● What does “body image” mean?

Body image is the picture we have in our minds of our physical body. It is how we feel about our bodies. Our body image can change after eating a dessert, seeing “the wrong number” on a scale or even hearing a negative comment about our appearance from someone else. The media strongly influences our perception of the right or perfect body image and suggests that we should try to achieve an idealised version of femininity or masculinity. Body image is also affected by the messages we receive as a child from our family, friends and peers.

● How can we define “femininity” and “masculinity”?

Femininity: what it means to be a girl or woman

Masculinity: what it means to be a boy or man
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● How do you think body image relates to puberty?

As our bodies mature during puberty, they grow and change in new ways. This often makes us think about our bodies and wonder if we are “normal” and “attractive” as young women and men.

● What does it mean to have a “positive body image”?

You appreciate your natural body shape. You feel proud and accepting of your body. You feel comfortable and confident in your body. You recognise that your body shape, like other physical traits, is determined in part by your heredity or family heritage. You realise that your body shape has nothing to do with your value as a person.

● What does it mean to have a “negative body image”?

You feel anxious or embarrassed about your body. You are ashamed of it. You feel uncomfortable and awkward in your body. You believe that your value as a person depends on your body shape.

● Why is it important to have a “positive body image”?

When you feel better about yourself, you are more likely to take good care of yourself. You will be happier and healthier. You will be able to fight the pressure to achieve unrealistic standards of physical attractiveness.

● Group Task #1: Make a list of factors that make it difficult for kids to have positive body images during puberty.

Answers might include: weight gain and changes in our bodies during puberty, peer pressure, the media, parents who have negative body images and/or fashion trends that favour very thin people.
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● One of the reasons we have unrealistic ideas about ideal body types is because the media portrays “beauty” in very stereotypical ways.

Define a stereotype as: an opinion about someone or a group of people that is often negative and that might be based on gender, race, religion, class, sexuality, ability or physical appearance.

● Group Task # 2: Fill out the “Ideal Femininity” and “Ideal Masculinity” Charts.

Once your students have completed the charts, discuss their ideas. Listen for any stereotypical or sexist responses given by students. Discuss the reasons it is inappropriate for people to assume that women and men should act in stereotypical ways. Stress that all women and all men are different and may or may not assume these traits. Some examples of such generalizations are as follows.

Women: domestic, homemakers, passive, helpless, dependent, beautiful, sexy, skinny, large-breasted, overemotional, prim and proper

Men: protectors, aggressive, brave, tough, strong, breadwinner, muscular, gorgeous, powerful, athletic, violent and insensitive

Since this lesson is focused on body image, be sure to call attention to any stereotypes that deal specifically with the body. Consider asking the questions that follow.

● Are these stereotypes and standards possible for most people?

No. They are unrealistic and impossible for most people. The majority of women and men do not look anything like the models and actors who appear on television and in magazines. Women who are very thin with larger breasts are not any more “feminine” than other women. Men who are lean with larger muscles are not any more “masculine” than other men.
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- What do you think happens when people can not meet these standards of femininity and masculinity?

  They feel badly about themselves. They develop a negative body image and low self-esteem.

- Are the pressures the same for girls and boys?

  Both girls and boys face pressures around body image. However, there are more realistic images of boys and men in the media than there are of girls and women. This may explain why girls report that they think about their weight and dieting more often than boys. Young women also express a great deal more dissatisfaction with their bodies than do young men. They are more likely to develop eating disorders. However, young men are facing increasing pressure to conform to unrealistic standards of masculinity. As the pressure for boys to develop muscular physiques rises, the use of steroids in boys also increases.

Activity Two: Group Work At Stations - 50 minutes

There are four activities for this activity. Set up eight stations in your classroom – two for each activity. Leave the Station Work handouts on Female Advertisements, Male Advertisements, Nutrition and Physical Activity at the appropriate stations. Each of the groups will move through the stations, ensuring they complete all four activities. Allow the students ten minutes to work at each station before moving along to the next.

Activity Three: Take Up A Few Questions - 10 minutes

When all groups have completed the group work, ask for volunteers to share some of their answers. Ask the following questions.
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Nutrition And Physical Activity Station Work

● What are three benefits to healthy eating?
● What are three benefits to active living?

To supplement this discussion, consider sharing information with your students from the handout entitled, “Tips for Healthy Eating and Keeping a Positive Body Image”. It provides suggestions for kids to be healthy, fit and to have fun. The handout may also be copied for parents. You might also distribute a copy of Canada’s Food Guide for the students’ reference. It can be accessed at [www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/index_e.html](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/index_e.html)

● Who is in control of what you eat and what you do?

It is important to empower your students with regards to their own health. They need to hear positive messages and they need to be given the confidence to make smart choices for themselves. That being said, since they are children, their parents will be partially responsible for their diet and, to a lesser extent, their activity level. Acknowledge the fact that some children have limited access to healthy food choices in their home environment. However, you can still encourage children to make as many healthy choices as they can.

Female And Male Advertisements

● Can someone review the list of products that women are sold?
● Can someone please list the products that men are sold?
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At this point, it is worth discussing the number of personal hygiene products that are advertised to young people, versus those products that are necessary for proper hygiene. Create a chart on the chalkboard, as illustrated below. Emphasise how few products they actually need by creating a short list of their ideas. This list might include soap, shampoo, deodorant/antiperspirant, toothbrush, toothpaste, dental floss, nail clippers, razor (optional) and feminine hygiene products such as pads and/or tampons. Remind students that advertisers try to make preteens feel as if they need many products to improve themselves and to be clean, healthy and attractive. Stress that they need only a few items to achieve proper hygiene during puberty.

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<tr>
<th>Products that are sold to women</th>
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<th>Products that are necessary for proper hygiene</th>
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What is the main message that advertisers are trying to send us?

Tell your students that the underlying message of most advertisements for personal products is: “You are not good enough as you are”. Inform the children that this message is completely false: They do not need a large number of products to be clean, healthy and attractive. Your students need to know that commercials on television and advertisements in magazines are designed to get them to buy something.
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Activity Four: Discussion About Hygiene - 10 minutes

• What are some of the body changes that happen during puberty that would make you want to change your hygiene?

  Answers might include: sweat glands and oil glands are more productive, or that wearing braces requires more careful oral hygiene practices.

• Why is it important to have good hygiene?

  By taking care of our bodies through proper hygiene, we are more likely to stay healthy. Good hygiene can also help us better cope with the changes that occur in puberty.

• There are many ways that girls and boys can practice good hygiene.

Oral Hygiene

• How can we take care of our teeth and gums?

  Brush our teeth three times a day.
  Floss our teeth every night.
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Hygiene for the body

● What happens to our skin during puberty?

As hormone levels increase, the oil glands (on the face, shoulders, chest and back) become more active. If the pores are blocked, blackheads may result. When bacteria get into pores, it can cause infections that produce pimples.

● What can you do?

Washing your face with soap and water, with a face cloth a few times a day, can help remove oils from the skin and keep your pores clean. Regular showers will help to clear up pimples from your shoulders, chest and back. Sometimes, washing does not help acne problems. In these cases, you should talk to a parent, teacher, or consult a doctor.

● Why does body odour occur during puberty?

At puberty, sweat glands start to produce more secretions. When these secretions are exposed to air and moisture, they produce odours.

● What can you do?

Take daily showers or baths with soap and water. Pay particular attention to underarms and the pubic area to decrease unpleasant odours. Wash your hair at least three times a week. Dry your skin well after you shower or bathe. You might also try wearing antiperspirant or deodorant. Finally, be sure to change your underwear every day.
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Hygiene for girls

● What do girls need to think about during puberty?

When girls begin to menstruate, the promotion of good vaginal health becomes important. To prevent the growth of harmful bacteria, girls should change their tampons or pads every four hours. Tampons or pads with deodorant should not be used, as they can be harmful to delicate membranes. Contrary to what commercials will tell you, thin pads (pantiliners) are NOT required for everyday use.

Girls should also avoid wearing tight jeans or pants. This can lead to vaginal infections. Young women should wear underwear and pantyhose that are lined with cotton. This allows for better absorption and freer exchange of air that discourages bacterial growth. Girls should avoid wearing underwear to sleep at night unless they are large and/or loose-fitting such as boxer shorts.

Douches are unnecessary as the vagina secretes its own cleansing mucous.

Vaginal sprays are not recommended since they can cause irritations.

Hygiene for boys

● What do boys need to think about during puberty?

Boys should not wear tight jeans or pants because they prevent good air circulation in the pubic region. Jeans should be washed frequently to prevent odour and infections from starting in the scrotal region.

Any boy who has an uncircumcised penis must learn to wash away the oily secretions that collect under the foreskin.

Boys should use athletic supports when engaging in active sports. If pain or bruising occurs as a result of injury, and does not go away fairly quickly, ask your parent about it. You may require the attention of a doctor.
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*Activity Five: Hip To Hygiene Quiz - 10 minutes*

If time allows, have the students fill out the Hip To Hygiene Quiz. They could complete the quiz individually or in groups. Take a few minutes to review the answers and to address any questions your students may have.

**Answers to the Hip To Hygiene Quiz:**

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<tbody>
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<td>1. True</td>
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<td>2. True</td>
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<td>3. False</td>
<td>8. True</td>
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<td>4. True</td>
<td>9. True</td>
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<td>5. False</td>
<td>10. False</td>
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*Activity Six: Body Matters Reflective Writing Homework Assignment - 5 minutes*

For homework, consider allowing students to complete a reflective writing assignment that focuses on body image. Reflective writing allows students to share their own opinions and personal feelings. Due to the sensitive nature of body image, there are four topics from which students can choose. Distribute the Body Matters assignment for homework.
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Possible Extensions

This lesson lends itself to many creative extensions. Students could write monologues from the perspectives of people dealing with body image issues or eating disorders. Should your students identify an advertisement or television program that they find offensive, you could coordinate a letter writing campaign. You can consult various youth-oriented media websites such as Media Watch Youth (www.mediawatchyouth.ca) or the Media Awareness Network (www.media-awareness.ca) for support.

Possible Assessment

Group members could evaluate themselves and/or each other in terms of their participation at the stations. You could mark the Hip To Hygiene Quiz. The homework assignment also includes an evaluation component for the written response.

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“Ideal Femininity” and “Ideal Masculinity” Charts

Ask yourselves, “How would you describe the ideal feminine woman?”  Think about the following questions: What makes her “ideal”?  What does she look like?  What are her personality traits?  What does she like to do?  What makes her feminine?

[Blank table for responses]

Ask yourselves, “How would you describe the ideal masculine man?”  Think about the following questions: What makes him “ideal”?  What does he look like?  What are his personality traits?  What does he like to do?  What makes him masculine?

[Blank table for responses]
1. As a group, create a list of your favourite foods. Write down everyone’s ideas.

2. Go through your list and circle all those foods that you consider “healthy choices”?

3. How many do you think are “unhealthy food choices”, if you eat them often?

4. It is very important for children to eat well.
   List three benefits that come from kids eating healthy foods.

5. Pretend that you need to plan and cook a “healthy meal” for your family.
   Try to include each of the four food groups in your dinner.
   Explain how you would prepare it.
Physical Activity

1. As a group, brainstorm all of your favourite things to do. Write everyone’s ideas on your sheet. Some examples might be playing soccer or watching television.

2. Go through your list and circle all those choices that are physically ACTIVE – that require kids to walk, run, play and move around.

3. How many activities are on your list?
   - How many of your choices were active?
   - How many were inactive?

4. It is very important for children to be active.
   - List three benefits that come from kids being physically active.
   - Are there any “wrong reasons” to be active?
Female Advertisement

Go from flabby ..

| Do you need to lose a few pounds? |
| Want to get a date for the school dance? |
| Are you jealous of skinny girls? |
| Still trying to get rid of that ugly baby fat? |
| Wish you could fit into a smaller size? Or look good in a bikini? |

We can help.

When you buy our 100% Natural Fat-Burning Weight Loss Pills, you will lose weight without diet or exercise.

Call Flab-Away at 1-800-SKINNY-1 to order your first bottle of these miracle diet pills.

Say goodbye to your thunder thighs!

After you have read this advertisement, please answer the following questions.

1. People who make advertisements like this are trying to make you feel a certain way.

How did the people at “Flab-Away” want girls to feel after seeing their advertisement?

How did you feel after reading it?

2. Make a list of all the products that are made for women to improve themselves.
   Start at the top of a woman’s body, with products to improve her hair, and continue down her body to her feet.
Male Advertisement

Beanpole?

Chubby?

Perfect!

Are you the last person chosen for a team in gym class?

Tired of being picked on?

Having trouble getting a date?

Do you wish girls would notice you?

Classmates calling you “beanpole”?

Want to turn your flab into hard muscle?

We can help.

When you drink our protein shakes, you are getting important vitamins and minerals that will increase your lean muscle mass.

Call Muscle Milk at 1-800-DRINK-UP to order your new body in

After you have read this advertisement, please answer the following questions.

1. People who make advertisements like this are trying to make you feel a certain way.

How did the people at “Muscle Milk” want boys to feel after seeing their advertisement?

How did you feel after reading it?

2. Make a list of all the products that are made for men to improve themselves. Start at the top of a man’s body, with products to improve his hair, and continue down his body to his feet.
It is no fun to worry all of the time about how much you weigh, how much you eat, how muscular you are or whether you are thin enough. Instead, try some of these ideas:

- Have fun! Find a sport (like basketball or soccer) or an activity (like jumping rope or dancing or karate or riding your bike) that you like and do it! Join a team or join the YMCA. Be active with a friend or practice by yourself.

- Good health and having fun go hand-in-hand. Try out different hobbies, like drawing, reading, playing music or making things. See what you are good at and enjoy these things.

- Be healthy and fit! Remember that kids and adults who exercise and stay active are healthier and better able to do what they want, no matter what they weigh.

- All foods can be part of healthy eating. There are no “good” or “bad” foods. Try to eat lots of different foods including fruits, vegetables and even sweets sometimes.

- Try to eat lots of healthy snacks like apples, popcorn, raisins, cheese and crackers, cereal, raisins or carrot and celery sticks dipped in peanut butter.

- Eat when you are hungry. Stop eating when you are full.

- If you are sad or mad or have nothing to do, and you are not really hungry, find something to do other than eating. Often, talking with a friend or parent or teacher is helpful.

- Feel good about how you look! Remind yourself that healthy bodies and happy people come in all shapes and sizes. No one body shape or body size is a healthy one or the right one for every body.

- Some people believe that fat people are bad, sick and out-of-control, while thin people are good, healthy and in-control. This is not true and it is hurtful.

- Do not tease people about being too fat, too thin, too short or too tall. Don’t laugh at jokes about people’s bodies. Teasing is unfair and it hurts.

- When you hear people saying they are “too fat and need to go on a diet”, tell them you think they look just fine the way they are. Remind them that dieting to lose weight is not healthy – and no fun – for kids or adults. Tell them that being thinner is not the same thing as being healthier and happier.

- Appreciate yourself and for all you are – everyone should respect themselves, like themselves, enjoy playing and being active and eat a variety of healthy foods!

- You are terrific just the way you are!

## Quiz

**Hip To Hygiene**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>True</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Washing your face every day can help control pimples.</td>
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<td>2. Tobacco and soda pop stain teeth.</td>
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<td>3. Getting a lot of sun is good for acne.</td>
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<td>4. Flossing your teeth every day removes food between teeth that can cause bad breath.</td>
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<td>5. You should put on deodorant or antiperspirant after gym class.</td>
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<td>6. Eating chocolate and greasy foods will cause pimples.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. The best way to stay clean during puberty is to wash your body on a daily basis.</td>
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<td>8. Using fluoride toothpaste will help fight tooth decay and cavities.</td>
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<td>9. Males tend to sweat more than females.</td>
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<td>10. If you scrub your face very hard, you can eliminate blemishes.</td>
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Hygiene Hints

When you take care of your body, through good personal hygiene, you are helping yourself to stay healthy and to enhance your self-esteem.

**What happens to my skin during puberty?**

As hormone levels increase, the oil glands (on the face, shoulders, chest and back) become more active. If the pores are blocked, blackheads may result. When bacteria get into pores, it can cause infections that produce pimples.

**What can I do?**

Washing your face with soap and water, with a face cloth a few times a day, can help remove oils from the skin and keep your pores clean. Regular showers will help to clear up pimples from your shoulders, chest and back. Sometimes, washing does not help acne problems. In these cases, you should talk to a parent, a teacher or your family doctor.

**Why does body odour occur during puberty?**

At puberty, sweat glands start to produce more secretions. When these secretions are exposed to air and moisture, they produce odours.

**What can I do?**

Take daily showers or baths with soap and water. Pay particular attention to underarms and the pubic area to decrease unpleasant odours. Wash your hair at least three times a week. Dry your skin well after you shower or bathe. You might also try wearing antiperspirant or deodorant. Finally, be sure to change your underwear every day.
**Hygiene Hints**

**What do girls need to think about during puberty?**

- When girls begin to menstruate, the promotion of good vaginal health becomes important. To prevent the growth of harmful bacteria, girls should change their tampons or pads every four hours. Tampons or pads with deodorant should not be used, as they can be harmful to delicate membranes. Contrary to what commercials will tell you, thin pads (pantiliners) are NOT required for everyday use.

- Girls should also avoid wearing tight jeans or pants. This can lead to vaginal infections. Young women should wear underwear and pantyhose that are lined with cotton. This allows for better absorption and freer exchange of air that discourages bacterial growth. Girls should avoid wearing underwear to sleep at night unless they are large and/or loose-fitting such as boxer shorts.

- Douches are unnecessary as the vagina secretes its own cleansing mucous.

- Vaginal sprays are not recommended since they can cause irritations.

**What do boys need to think about during puberty?**

- Boys should not wear tight jeans or pants because they prevent good air circulation in the pubic region. Jeans should be washed frequently to prevent odour and infections from starting in the scrotal region.

- Any boy who has an uncircumcised penis must learn to wash away the oily secretions that collect under the foreskin.

- Boys should use athletic supports when engaging in active sports. If pain or bruising occurs as a result of injury, and does not go away fairly quickly, ask your parent about it. You may require the attention of a doctor.
Hygiene Hints

Resources


Choose ONE (1) of the following four options. Your written assignment should be one page in length.

**Option One:**

Think about a time when you got angry or upset because the media portrayed a woman or a man in a particular way. Describe the commercial, television show, music video or movie and then write about how it made you feel.

**Option Two:**

Write a few paragraphs that describe your opinion of the media’s obsession with thin and muscular body types. Suggest things that television and advertising producers could do differently to make average people feel better about themselves.

**Option Three:**

We have been talking about body image during our puberty unit. This topic might be meaningful to you, to someone in your family or to one of your friends. If you are comfortable doing so, write about a personal experience with body image issues. Remember to give your characters fake names so they can be anonymous.

**Option Four:**

Imagine that one of your friends keeps complaining that s/he is “too fat” and needs to go on a diet. Knowing what you do about keeping a healthy body image and the avoiding dieting, write a paragraph that outlines what you could say to your friend.