

Condensed from 'Teen Hygiene Tips' By R. Morgan Griffin

When it comes to teen hygiene, **what do you need to discuss with your kids?** Here's a rundown.

Showering. Once puberty hits, daily showering becomes essential. Recommend that they use a mild soap and concentrate on the face, hands, feet, underarms, groin and bottom. Washing under the fingernails is key, too.

Washing hair. Discuss the pros and cons of daily hair washing. Some teens may prefer to skip days to prevent their hair from drying out. Others may want to wash their hair daily -- especially if they have oily hair, which can both look greasy and aggravate acne.

Using deodorant or antiperspirant. When puberty hits, sweat glands become more active and the chemical composition of the sweat changes, causing it to smell stronger. When you or your kid begin to notice it, using deodorant or an antiperspirant should become part of their daily teen hygiene.

Changing clothes. Before puberty, your kid might have gotten away with wearing the same shirt -- or even the same underwear and same socks -- day after day without anyone noticing. After puberty, that won't fly. Get your teen to understand that along with showering, wearing clean clothes each day is an important part of teen hygiene.

Understanding the body. If you're talking about good teen hygiene, that also means talking about puberty. Girls need to know about breast development and menstruation. Boys need to know about erections and wet dreams. Don't tiptoe around these subjects. If they don't get the info from you, they'll get some distorted version of it from their peers.

Getting Your Kids to Practice Good Teen Hygiene

Make good hygiene a responsibility. If your teen is resistant to basic teen hygiene -- like showering after practice or using deodorant -- don't just nag or plead. **Explain that taking care of himself is a responsibility, and start treating it like his other household duties.** Just as he is supposed to take out the trash and keep his room clean, he now has to look after his hygiene. If he doesn't, there should be clear repercussions, like revoked privileges.

Start early. Altmann recommends that most parents start talking about teen hygiene issues -- and giving over some responsibility for them -- by age 10.

Don't come down too hard. Don't start by hassling your kids about their hygiene. Try to avoid confrontations. Once it becomes a struggle, your kids might be more likely to dig in their heels.

Of course, your child may resist your attempts to talk about good hygiene. She may protest, and roll her eyes, and insist she doesn't want to hear it. But press on anyway. She'll probably be grateful that you did.