Self-care & Hygiene with FASD – Adolescents

Adapted from *Strategies not Solutions* - NOFASD Australia. For deeper guidance and practical strategies, see the full booklet.

What's important to understand

Adolescents with FASD may:

- forget self-care routines or lose track of steps
- struggle with sequencing tasks such as showering or grooming
- experience sensory sensitivities related to smell, touch or products
- may experience dysmaturity, where self-care skills don't match chronological age
- need continued support during puberty and body changes
- want independence while still needing guidance and structure
- feel shame or frustration when expectations don't match capacity
- have difficulty sensing or understanding body cues

These differences are linked to brain-based and sensory differences, not motivation, carelessness or lack of interest.

What can help

Predictable routines

Using the same self-care routines at consistent times supports memory, confidence and follow-through.

Visual and step-by-step support

Checklists, cue cards, visual prompts and timers can support sequencing for hygiene, grooming and daily care tasks.

Ongoing practice and reminders

Revisiting routines and offering reminders supports consistency, especially during change or travel.

Sensory-informed products and environments

Using familiar, well-tolerated products and reducing sensory overload across different environments (school, home, public spaces) can make self-care more manageable.

Respectful support for puberty and safety

Clear, practical support with monthly periods, shaving, sexual health and personal safety helps adolescents care for their bodies with dignity.

What can make it harder

- Expectations increasing based on age rather than support needs
- Assuming routines are remembered without reminders or visual cues
- Sensory discomfort from products, smells or textures
- Support being experienced as judgement rather than care

When to seek extra support

If self-care difficulties are ongoing or affecting wellbeing, it's important to seek guidance from a health professional.

A strengths-based reminder: Self-care skills develop best when support is respectful, ongoing and matched to individual needs, and the people who support the adolescent know them best.

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1800 860 613

www.nofasd.org.au