

Points to Remember When Talking to Your Kids About Sex

- Parents are the primary sex educators of their children whether they intend to be or not. So if you say a lot, or don't talk to them at all, you're still conveying powerful messages about sex and sexuality.
- Remember, it's not just the single "sex talk," anymore, especially considering everything our children see and hear today about sex and sexuality.
- When do I begin? Sexuality education begins immediately after birth. Parents who touch and cuddle their infants and soothe their fears and tears are teaching them that they are lovable people and helping them learn to relate to others.
- What about those pre-school years? This is the time children are curious about their bodies and the bodies of the opposite sex. Start by talking about the proper names for our body parts.
- Girls should know they have a vagina and boys should know they have a penis. Slang words are not appropriate when talking to young children about sexuality. Both boys and girls should know that their bodies are made differently.
(Remember, sound bites, not sermons)



- As children grow, they are especially in tune with their parent's behavior. They learn how to interact with others by observing you. Parents who demonstrate warmth, affection and support for their spouses/partners, provide children with positive role models for future relationships.
- Children begin developing sexuality attitudes in early childhood. These attitudes are influenced by what is and isn't discussed and by the nonverbal messages parents sometimes send. For example, it's not a good idea to frown or scold when a small child touches his/her genitals. We don't want to communicate that certain parts of the body are "bad" or "dirty."
- Parents who respond to their child's sexual curiosity may increase the likelihood that their children will come to them for information and advice as they grow older.



Girls

- Today, it's not unusual for a girl to start her period as early as age 9 or 10! Yikes, you're probably not ready for the "period" talk, but get ready and get comfortable, it's about to start.
- Remember, this doesn't have to be a lecture. You can start the talk with something like this: *"I see you're getting taller everyday and you're starting to fill out a little more. These are two signs that soon you may start your period. So Victoria, you'll probably recognize some other changes too—your pubic hair will get curly and your breasts will start to grow a little, but don't be scared, because all these changes are normal."* End of first talk.
- The next talk should be a sound bite as well: *"Victoria, I just wanted to tell you that when you start your period, it probably won't be in one big "gush," but you'll see a little blood in your underwear. It might be bright red or just pink, but this is another sign you'll be starting your period soon."*



Boys

- Don't forget to talk to your 9, 10, 11 year old son about erections, sperm, ejaculations and masturbation. Understanding that erections are normal, that sperm cells make babies, that ejaculations expel sperm in a watery fluid, and that masturbation is a normal sexual behavior.



- Your own values will determine how you describe all of these changes, but do your best because you owe it to your son or daughter.
- You get the idea, short, sweet talks that don't scare your child, but are fully informative, age-appropriate and easy to understand. Diagrams are not needed at this stage of development.
- They're getting older now! Research shows that kids who talk to their parents about sex make better sexual decisions as they grow up.
- Twelve years of age isn't too early to talk to your kids about sexual activity. Buy a couple of books, read a couple of evidence-based articles on the internet, talk to a nurse, a PA, a physician or a health educator and get ready to talk about some sensitive subjects; vaginal intercourse, anal intercourse, oral sex, teen pregnancy, sexually transmitted disease, infatuation, falling in love, falling out of love, protection, and the list goes on and on.
- Remember, if you keep the door open, the discussions will follow.



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