

"THE TALK" FROM TOTS TO TEENS

A parents guide for talking with your child about sexual health and well-being

Talking with your child about healthy relationships and sexual development is important. These conversations build trust between you and your child, helps your child with decision making, and supports their safety and wellbeing. It is never too soon or too late to find teachable moments and share your values and beliefs.

Whatever your child's age, gender, ability, sexual orientation, faith, or culture, this is for you.

Here are some age appropriate topics to get you started...

Youth in Waterloo Region have said they want to talk with their parents about sexual health.

Parent-child communication about sexual health encourages positive behaviour, such as postponing sexual activity, having fewer sexual partners, and using contraception more consistently (Markam et al., 2010).

WHAT CAN I DO DURING...



INFANCY (0 to 2 years of age)

- provide opportunities for play with other children
- teach correct names of body parts



EARLY CHILDHOOD (3 to 5 years of age)

- teach the basics of reproduction (e.g., need an egg, sperm, and a uterus)
- teach basic rules around privacy (e.g., touching one's own genitals is done in private)
- teach child "your body belongs to you" and teach your child to say no or stop to behaviours that make them uncomfortable
- start conversations about what a healthy relationship is (e.g., sharing, being kind to others)



MIDDLE CHILDHOOD (6 to 8 years of age)

- teach your child the similarities and differences between boys' and girls' bodies
- provide a basic understanding of how babies are made (i.e., sperm fertilizes an egg), sexual intercourse, and pregnancy
- begin talking about the physical changes with puberty (e.g., periods, wet dreams, hair growth)
- teach that there are a variety of sexual orientations
- value who your child is and let them be who they are
- reinforce that "your body belongs to you" and it's okay to say no or stop to behaviours that make them uncomfortable
- talk about what makes a good friend

WHAT TO EXPECT...

Between 0 and 2, your child may:

- explore their own body parts including genitals
- benefit from hugs

Between 3 and 5, your child may:

- like to be naked
- enjoy bathroom humour (e.g., pee, poo, fart)
- touch or rub their own genitals
- choose to close their bedroom/bathroom door for privacy
- be curious about other people's bodies

Between 6 and 8, your child may:

- begin to show early signs of puberty
- explore their own interests
- use language to shock, tease, joke, and impress friends
- continue to be curious about their own body and sexuality (e.g., be naked, "playing doctor", "acting or dressing like the same or opposite sex")

TURN PAGE OVER ▶





“THE TALK” FROM TOTS TO TEENS

LATE CHILDHOOD (9 to 12 years of age)

Between 9 and 12, your child may:

- discuss physical and emotional changes of puberty including how they feel about themselves
 - help your child understand and question sexual messaging and stereotypes in the media
 - be aware of what your child has access to online and teach them how to use technology safely (i.e., dangers of chat rooms, emailing messages and pictures, sexting)
 - discuss healthy relationships and warning signs of abuse
 - provide basic information of how to prevent pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections
 - discuss how to deal with peer pressure
 - discuss decision making and abstinence
 - continue to reinforce that “your body belongs to you”
- show physical and emotional changes of puberty
 - have crushes and begin to experiment with physical contact (e.g., kissing, hugging, touching)
 - masturbate
 - believe that everything they read and see on the internet is true
 - be more easily influenced by friends and the media
 - question their sexual orientation and/or gender



TEENS (13 to 18 years of age)

Between 13 and 18, your teen may:

- provide information and support for the physical and emotional changes during puberty
 - share your values and beliefs about sexuality with your teen, and be open to listening
 - encourage your teen to talk and ask questions and seek out the answers together
 - teach your teen about abstinence, birth control, condoms, and family planning
 - teach your teen about sexually transmitted infection (STI) prevention
 - discuss sexual decision making (e.g., some choices have consequences including rumours, STIs, unplanned pregnancy)
 - discuss with your teen the various types of sexual relationships and activities
 - discuss qualities of a healthy relationship (e.g., honesty, trust, respect, communication)
 - discuss qualities of an unhealthy relationship (e.g., control, bullying, emotional/physical abuse)
 - discuss dating and breaking up
 - encourage your teen to communicate with their romantic partner(s) whether and when to engage in sexual activities
 - discuss the importance of consent to sexual activity
 - discuss the impact of peer pressure, social pressure, and media relating to sexual decisions
 - be aware of what your child has access to online and teach them how to use technology safely (e.g., dangers of chat rooms, emailing messages and pictures, sexting, pornography)
 - provide community resources (e.g., family doctor, nurse practitioner, Public Health clinic, school nurse)
- have emotional and/or physical relationships
 - experience emotional changes including feelings of confusion, anger, sadness, anxiety, and excitement
 - have first loves or crushes or develop “committed” relationships
 - experience peer pressure
 - frequently use social networking and the internet to access sexual health information
 - question their sexual orientation and/or gender identity
 - develop their own values and beliefs around sexuality

For a list of web resources for parents visit:

www.regionofwaterloo.ca/sexualhealth

Booklist for Parents

http://ppwr.on.ca/documents/Children_and_Teen_Booklist.pdf

This resource was developed as part of the Waterloo Region Sexual Health Youth Strategy.



Accessible formats of this document are available upon request.

519-575-4400 (TTY 519-575-4608)
www.regionofwaterloo.ca/ph