"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, help your child with decision making, and support their safety and well-being. 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...

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”)
LATE CHILDHOOD (9 to 12 years of age)

- 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”

TEENS (13 to 18 years of age)

- 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

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