

SHARE Tips for Talking to Kids about Sexual Health

1. **Don't overthink it!** You are the parent, take a deep breath, and tell them what you want them to know.
2. **Don't be squeamish or uncomfortable.** You want your kids to know that they can come to you with ANY questions or to talk about ANY subject. If you act embarrassed or shocked, then they may go to someone else (or the internet) next time.
3. **Use correct terminology.** Penis, vagina, sperm, egg, uterus, testicles, etc. may be awkward to say, but the correct terms are important for students to understand their body.
4. **Be direct.** Don't talk about "making love" or "doing the deed" just say something like "Sex is when a man and woman bring their bodies so close together that they actually fit together. During these private times, sperm from the man's body can enter the woman's body. Sometimes a sperm joins with an egg in the woman's body and the woman becomes pregnant."
5. **Have a continuous conversation-NOT a "one and done."** Make sure your child knows that you are willing to talk to them anytime about anything. When it comes to their body and sexual health, you want to continue the conversation over weeks, months, and even years. There are lots of chances to bring up these conversations; you can use TV or movies or music as "points of entry" to the ongoing dialogue. For example, if a song talks about sex, use it as a talking point.
6. **Be a "soft place" to land.** Do not threaten or use scare tactics with your children when it comes to their bodies and health. Threatening to kick them out if they "ever got pregnant" or "got a girl pregnant" or things of that nature could dissuade them from coming to you if they ever find themselves in a difficult situation (sexual abuse, pornography addiction, unplanned pregnancy, etc.).

Suggested topics to discuss with your child:

Bullying (by 4th grade if not earlier)

Being a good friend (by 4th grade if not earlier)

Pornography (by 4th grade if not earlier)*

Puberty (by 5th grade if not earlier)**

Pregnancy (by 5th grade if not earlier)

STD/Is (by 6th grade if not earlier)

Abuse (by 6th grade if not earlier)

Sexting (by 7th grade OR before they get a phone)

Healthy romantic relationships (by high school if not before)

Revisit these topics as your child ages because the conversation will get more involved as they mature.

*The average age of first exposure to internet pornography is 11 (this is usually accidental). Remember that pornography can be written (books) or visual (videos, pictures).

**Start the conversation as soon as you notice early signs of puberty if it is before 5th grade.