

TALK TIPS

Parent Guidelines in Talking to Children about Sex

The following guidelines provide parents with a roadmap on how to talk to your children about the changes they experience in their bodies and sex. Be open and honest with your child and encourage them to feel safe to talk with you about anything.

It is never too early to start to ask and answer questions regarding our bodies and the changes we inevitably go through. Be sure to use appropriate language depending on the developmental stage of your child.

Ages 3-5:

At this stage your child knows there are differences between boys' and girls' private parts. They begin to take interest in these obvious differences and may want to touch or look at another's private parts.

What to say to your 3-5 year old:

Always use correct terminology when discussing private parts. Allow children to feel safe in exploring their own body in private. Help them not to touch others inappropriately without shaming them. Answer their questions with age-appropriate information.

Ages 6-9:

Your child may begin to ask your more specific questions about their own bodies and how they work.

What to say to your 6-9 year old:

Be honest and explore what your child already knows. Now is the time to talk about the "birds and the bees." Read from books and show illustrations if you need some help. Of course, assess your child's maturity level.

Ages 10-14:

Now is the time your child is going through puberty. They will be experiencing a lot of changes, so rev up those conversations if you haven't started them by now.

What to say to your 10-14 year old:

They often get misinformation from others. Be sure to clarify and weave in your own values and morals into the conversations you have with them. Let them know that all of the changes they are experiencing are normal and discuss some of your experiences going through puberty. Remember some will be "grossed out" but your talks, nonetheless they are important. Start addressing the topics of sex, relationships and the responsibilities and consequences that go along with having sex. Help them to say no and be mindful of when they feel uncomfortable around others.

