

# Learning About My Body

BIRTH TO TWO YEARS OF AGE



saskatchewan  
**preventioninstitute**  
our goal is **healthy** children

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## Dear Parent,

You are the most important influence in your child's life. You pass on your culture, spiritual beliefs, moral values, and knowledge to your child. As a parent, you know how important it is to care for your child's mental, physical, and spiritual wellbeing. Many parents don't think about the role they play in the development of their child's sexual health – especially when the child has not yet reached puberty. However, sexual development begins at birth. Healthy sexual development and parents' guidance in this development can be protective for children. Bringing up sexually healthy children requires communication, knowledge and proactive parenting.

Sexual development and the act of sex are two very different things. Sexual development occurs as children learn the difference between males and females. They become familiar and comfortable with the accurate names of all of their body parts. As children develop sexually, they learn about their need for and right to privacy. Finally, sexual development involves learning skills to prevent and protect themselves from sexual interference and assault.

It is important for parents to have basic information about the development of sexual health from infancy to adolescence. You don't need to have all of the information or answers. There are a lot of places that you can go to for more information. Check out your local library or bookstore. Ask your public health nurse or doctor. Explore information on the web from trustworthy sources.

The best time to start communicating healthy sexual information to your child is when he or she is a baby. Starting early not only helps your baby, but also helps you become more comfortable talking about sexual health with your child.

This booklet has been developed by the Saskatchewan Prevention Institute to support you in your role as your child's sexual health educator. In particular, this booklet helps you share important messages with your children about their development and bodies.

Remember, if you have any concerns or questions about your child's development, please talk to your public health nurse or doctor.

## Sexual Health Development Between Birth and 2 Years

Babies learn through their five senses: touch, smell, taste, sight, and sound. Babies love to be naked. They also like to be touched and have skin to skin contact.

Babies learn to feel loved and safe in their relationships with their parents and other primary caregivers. These healthy relationships help babies to learn how to trust.

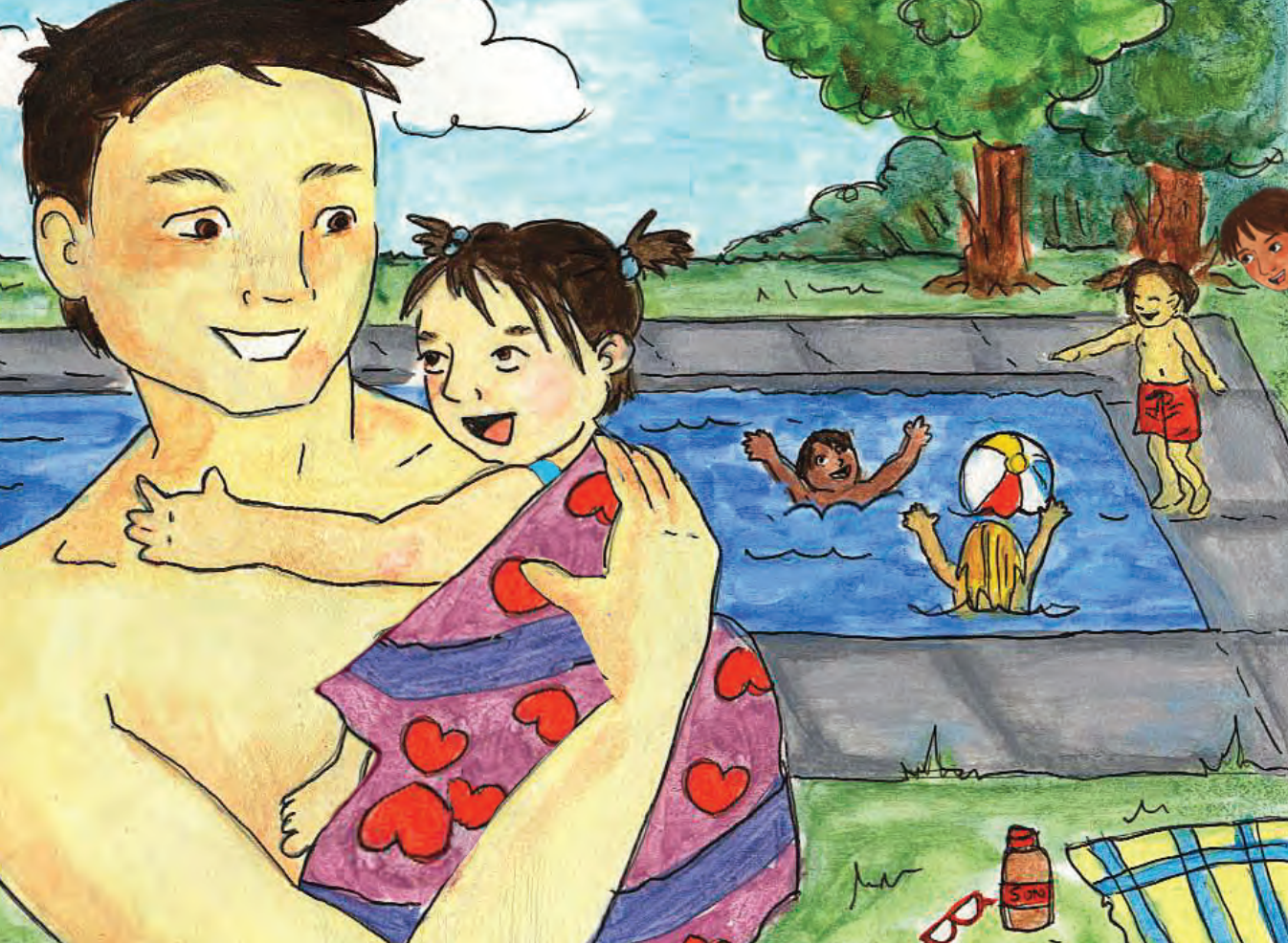
Babies learn many things in their first two years, including discovering their bodies. Boys begin to realize that they have penises around 7-8 months of age. Girls discover their vulva around 9-10 months of age. It is normal for them to touch their body parts. As babies, boys can have erections and girls can have lubrication (wetness) in their vulva. This is a reflex and is natural. It is not something that parents should feel embarrassed or worried about.

It is important that parents and caregivers teach their young children the proper names for their body parts. This will help children be comfortable with their bodies.

During the first 18 months of life, children begin to learn the differences between boys and girls. They will also begin to identify themselves as a girl or a boy. Two year olds start to recognize that the people around them are either male or female.

## How to Use This Booklet

1. Be sure to read the book to yourself first before reading it to your child. It is important to be comfortable with the information.
2. Read the book out loud to your child. Use the pictures to talk about the information.
3. Have fun. The more fun you can have with your child while reading the booklet, the more they will remember the messages.



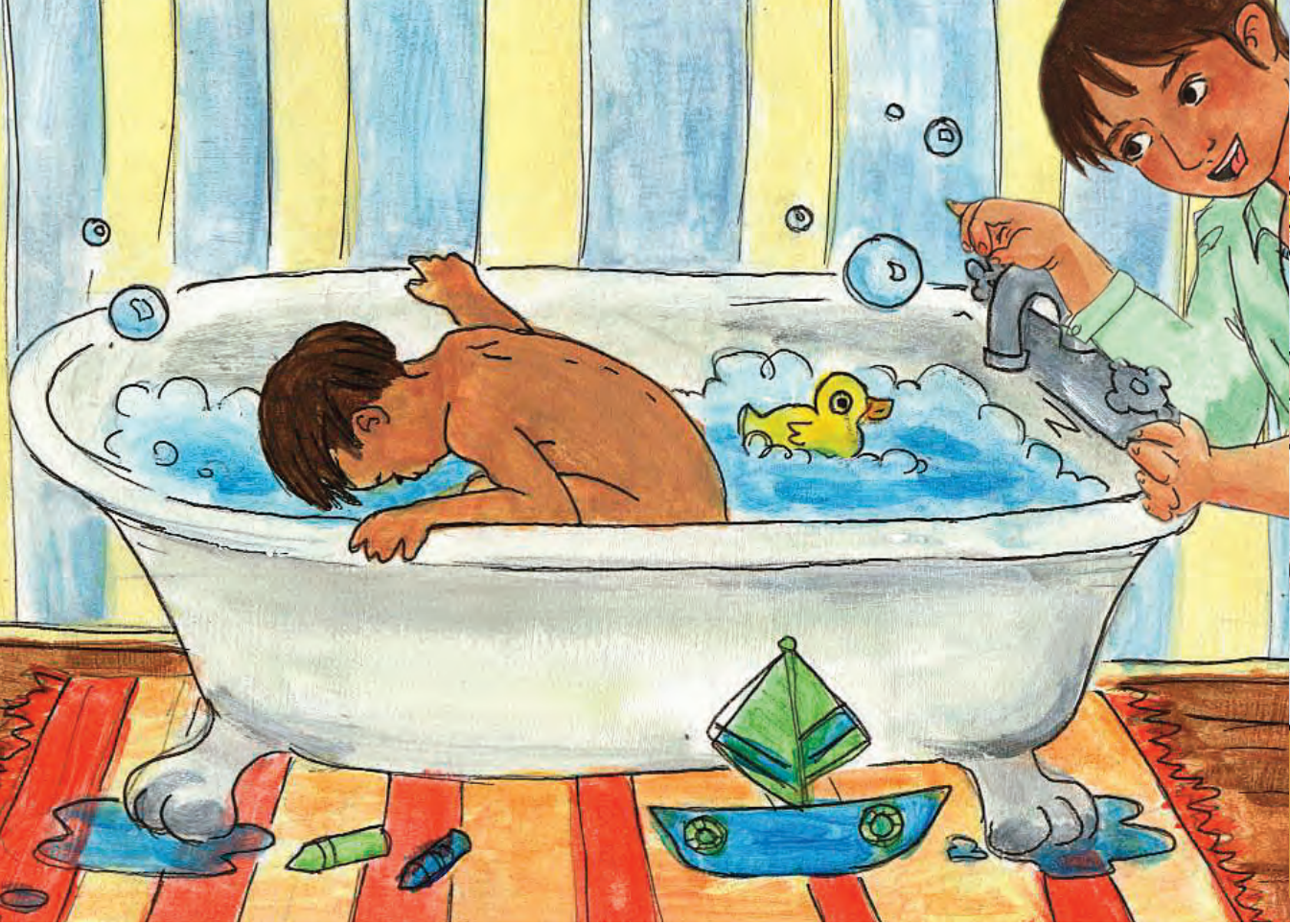
Alex and her daddy like to go swimming together at the local pool. After they get out, Alex's daddy cuddles with her and dries her off. Alex loves being held and hugged.



Bryce loves to run around the house without his diaper. The air feels good against his skin. Then it is time to put his diaper back on. When mommy puts it on, she always tickles his toes and tummy and makes it fun.

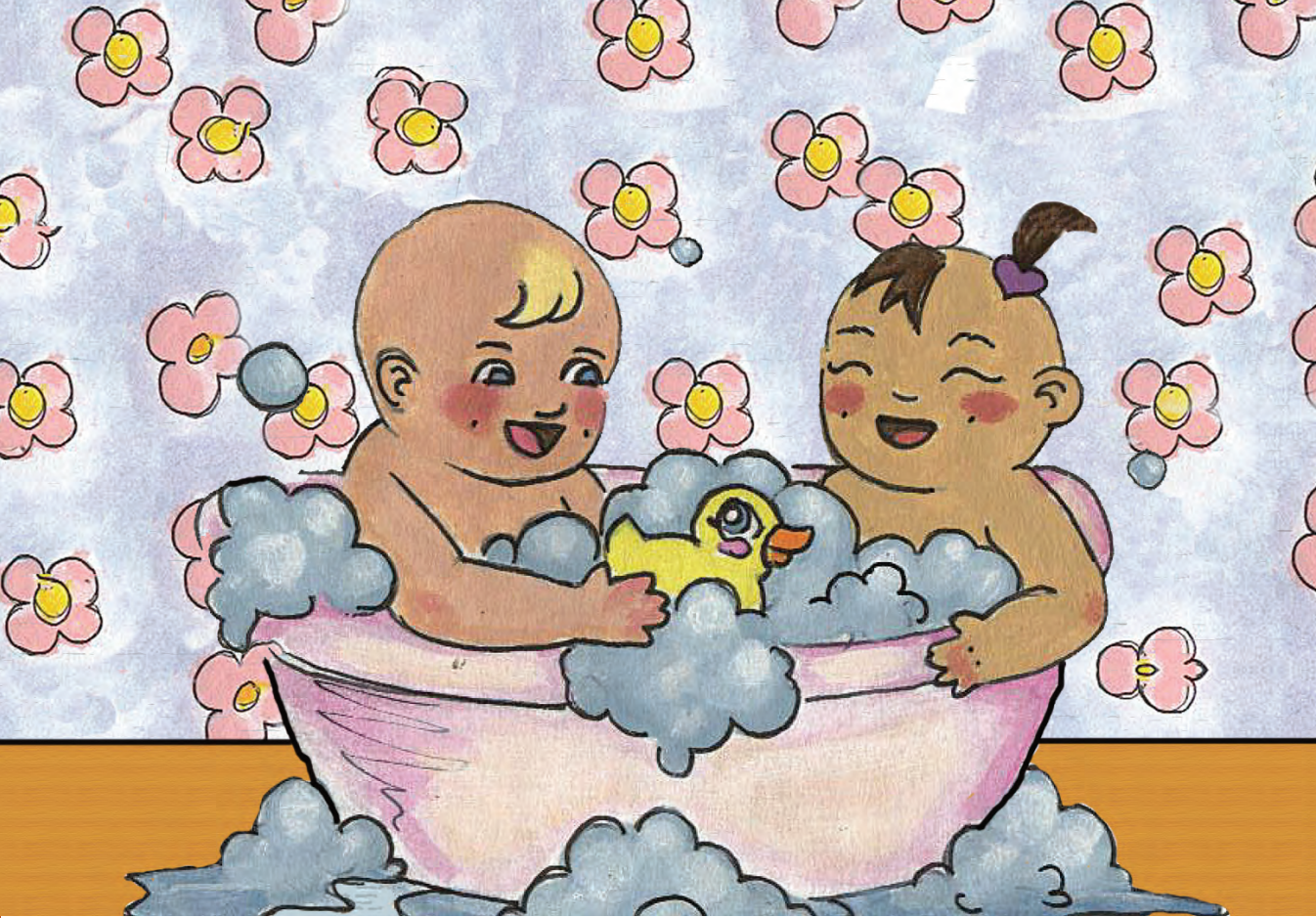


Here are Sarah and Mitch. They see that they look alike in some ways and different in some ways. Sarah is a girl and Mitch is a boy. They each have a head, hair, ears, eyes, a nose, shoulders, arms, hands, a chest, a belly button, legs, and feet. Because Sarah is a girl, she has a vagina. Mitch is a boy and has a penis.



Henry likes to look at his body and touch all his different parts. He is learning to use the proper names for his body parts.





Here are Aiden and Cynthia playing in the bathtub together. Their mommy is always right beside them so they can feel safe. The bubbles are lots of fun and they like to touch them. They are curious about their bodies. They like to laugh and play together, smell the soap, and feel the warm water.

Aiden and Cynthia are learning all about their bodies and the things around them. It is lots of fun.

## References

The Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada (n.d.). Sexuality and Childhood Development. Retrieved March 23, 2012, from <http://www.sexualityandu.ca/parents>

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (2009, April). Sexual Development and Behavior in Children: Information for Parents and Caregivers. Retrieved from <http://www.nctsnet.org/products/sexual-development-and-behavior-children-information-parents-and-caregivers-2009>

# MESSAGES FOR PARENTS

## Birth-2 Years



### Normal Sexual Development

- Explores own body, including genitals.
- Enjoys touch as well as skin to skin contact.
- Likes to be naked.

### Healthy Sexual Development

- Your child will develop the capacity to trust caregivers.
- Your child will experience pleasure through touch.
- Teach your child the correct names of body parts including genitals (e.g. vagina, penis, clitoris, scrotum, vulva, breasts, and buttocks).

### Promotion of Sexual Health and Prevention of Sexual Abuse

- Throughout your child's development be aware of possible signs of sexual abuse (e.g. trauma to the genitals, resistant or fearful of touch from others, and sexualized behaviour/inappropriate sexual behaviour).

The best time to start communicating healthy sexual information with your child is in the early stages of development. It is important that you become comfortable talking about sex with him or her. Your child may come to you with questions about sex, sexuality, and sex-related matters. Remember, you do not need to know all the answers, but you do want to be a reliable educator for your child.

To become more comfortable with discussions on sexual development, we encourage you to visit your local library or bookstores for books and DVDs. Remember to choose materials carefully; some may be more explicit than you thought. Think about the level of detail that would be good for your child's stage of development and his or her personal preference. Below is a list of recommended websites:

1. Information and resources for parents on children's sexuality. <https://teachingsexualhealth.ca/parents/>
2. Sexual Development and Behavior in Children: Information for Parents and Caregivers. [https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/sexual\\_development\\_and\\_behavior\\_in\\_children.pdf](https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/sexual_development_and_behavior_in_children.pdf)
3. Stewart Resource Centre of the Saskatchewan Teachers Federation. [www.stf.sk.ca](http://www.stf.sk.ca)

*For further information on this booklet or other resources  
created by the Saskatchewan Prevention Institute, visit:*

**[www.skprevention.ca](http://www.skprevention.ca)**