



Learning About My Body

TWO TO FIVE YEARS OF AGE



saskatchewan
preventioninstitute
our goal is **healthy** children

1319 Colony Street, Saskatoon, SK S7N 2Z1

Bus. 306.651.4300 Fax. 306.651.4301

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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 2 to 5 Years Old

Parents and caregivers should continue to teach their children the proper names for their body parts. It is important at this time that children begin to learn the concept of privacy. It is normal for children to touch their genitals throughout their childhood. At this age, parents can begin to reinforce that children should only touch their genitals in private (when they are alone).

When children between 2 and 5 years of age are playing together, they will play in ways that you may remember playing when you were a child. Creative play, such as “I’ll show you mine, if you show me yours”, “playing doctor”, or “playing house”, is normal and is part of healthy sexual development.

At this stage, children will begin to become curious about their bodies and about the bodies of other people in their lives.

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.

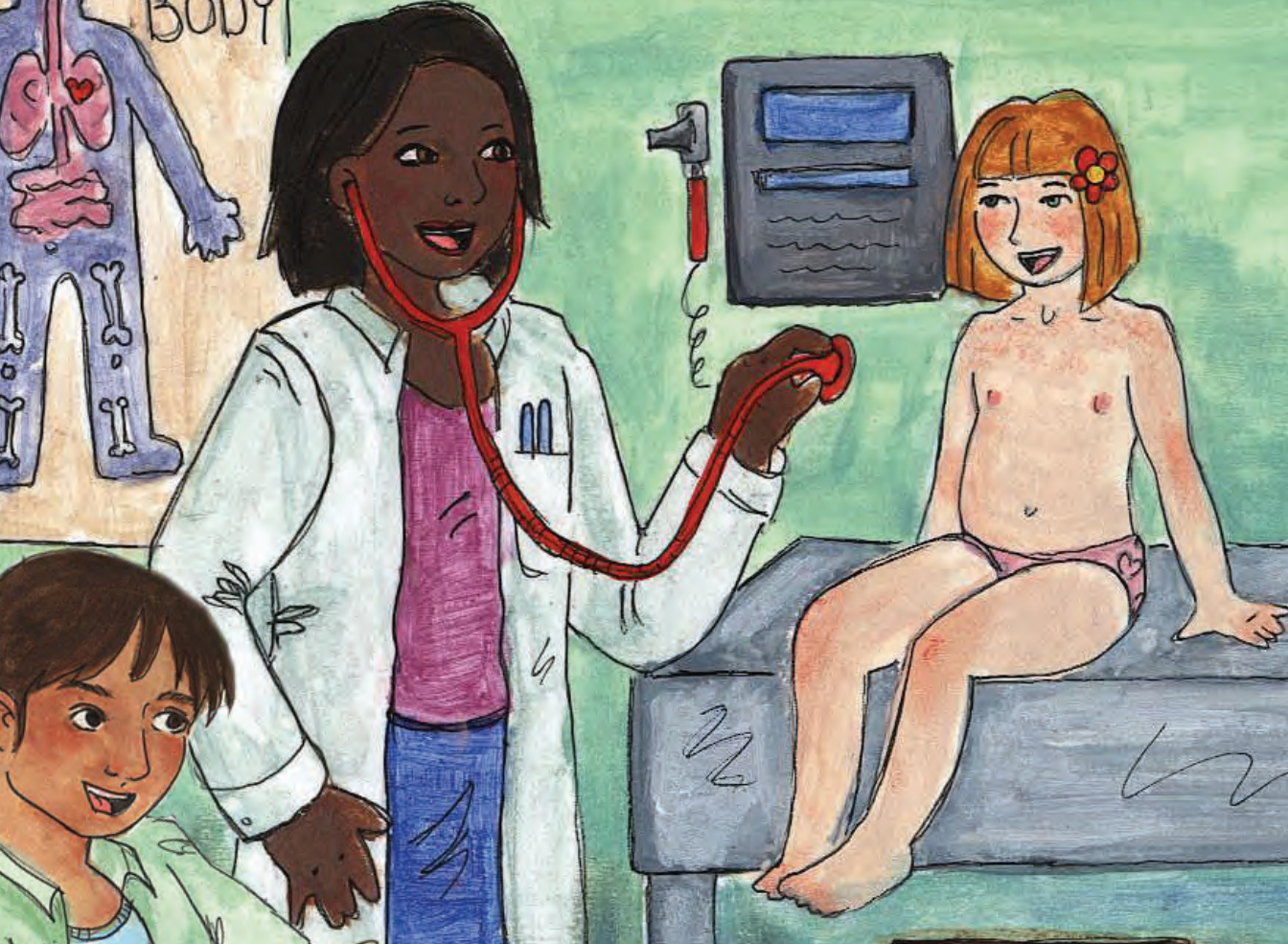


Here are Sarah and Mitch. They see that they look alike in some ways and different in some ways. Sarah is a girl and Mitch is a boy. They each have a head, hair, ears, eyes, a nose, shoulders, arms, hands, a chest, a belly button, legs, and feet. Because Sarah is a girl, she has a vagina. Because Mitch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



Here are Jack and Anne. They love story time.

One of the books that Mommy reads to them is all about their body parts. Mommy says that their bodies are very special. She tells them that their bodies belong to them and no one else. Sometimes, while Mommy is reading, Jack and Anne like to touch the body parts that they are learning about.



This is Jamie. She is at the doctor's office for a checkup. The doctor will ask Jamie if it is okay to touch her. The doctor needs to touch her to learn about Jamie's health. Jamie's mom tells her that if anyone ever touches her body and she doesn't feel good about it, she should tell an adult she trusts. The adult that Jamie feels safe with will help her.



Lesley is sitting at the bathroom door. She is fond of her big sister, Debbie. Sometimes she likes to be in the same room when Debbie showers or is getting ready to go out. Last year, Debbie's body started to grow and look different than Lesley's. Lesley's mom says that when children grow up their bodies change and start to look different. One day Lesley's body will change too.



Jacob, Millie, and Sam are playing together in the sand. They know that boys and girls can play and have lots of fun together. They are learning to respect each other's bodies.

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

2-5 Years



Normal Sexual Development

- Identifies self as a boy or a girl.
- Is curious about the genitalia of peers and adults of the same and opposite sex.
- Begins to understand the concept of privacy in relation to nudity and sexuality.
- Is able to understand the basic elements of human reproduction.

Healthy Sexual Development

- Do not scold your child for demonstrating normal developmental behaviour such as talking about private parts or attempting to see other people when they are naked or undressing.
- Avoid instilling a sense of guilt or shame.
- Explain to your child that touching his or her genitals is a private act.
- Understand that your reaction to the opposite sex or nudity will influence the child's perception of sexuality, gender and sexual behaviour.
- Answer questions honestly with the facts. Short answers are the best. Give only as much detail as the child asks for.

Promotion of Sexual Health and Prevention of Sexual Abuse

Teach your child

- Proper names for body parts.
- That his or her body belongs to him or her.
- That he or she has a right to privacy.
- The difference between appropriate and inappropriate touch.
- That he or she should never be bribed or tricked to do things that make him or her uncomfortable.

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
3. Stewart Resource Centre of the Saskatchewan Teachers Federation. www.stf.sk.ca

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