



MESSAGES FOR PARENTS

5-8 Years

Normal Sexual Development

- Begins to participate in curiosity-based sex role play with friends of the same or opposite sex.
- May begin to show early signs of puberty (e.g., growth of pubic hair, breast development).
- Develops sense of gender identity (understanding that they are male or female).
- May have a basic understanding of sexual orientation (e.g., heterosexuality, homosexuality, bisexuality).

Healthy Sexual Development

- Provide your child with basic information about the human reproductive system, including sexual intercourse.
- Begin to prepare your child for the physical changes associated with puberty.
- Reaffirm with your child the correct names for body parts (e.g., vagina, penis, clitoris, scrotum, vulva, breasts, and buttocks).
- Avoid the use of slang words to describe body parts and sexuality.

Promotion of Sexual Health and Prevention of Sexual Abuse

- Watch for signs of possible sexual abuse or exploitation (e.g., physical trauma to the genitals, sexually related behavioural acts, and early initiation of sexual acts).
- Reinforce and expand your child's knowledge of his or her rights (e.g., "your body belongs to you") and the responsibilities related to sexuality (e.g., equal relationships).

Resources

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. Teaching Sexual Health for Parents
<http://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. It's Easier Than You Think:
Tips for Talking With Your Kids About Sexual Health
<https://skprevention.ca/sexual-health/parents-as-educators>