



MESSAGES FOR PARENTS

Birth to 2 Years

At this age, many children will:

- Explore their own body, including genitals.
- Enjoy touch as well as skin-to-skin contact.
- Like to be naked.

Healthy Sexual Development

- Your child will develop the capacity to trust caregivers.
- Your child will experience pleasure through touch.
- Begin to teach your child how to respectfully interact with others (e.g., soft touch, taking turns).

Promotion of Sexual Health and Prevention of Sexual Abuse

- Teach your child the correct names for body parts including genitals (e.g., penis, scrotum, vulva, vagina, buttocks). This promotes positive body image and builds the foundation for future discussions about appropriate and inappropriate touch.
- Teach your child to say “no” to unwanted touch or behaviours, regardless of who is approaching them.
- 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/inappropriate sexual behaviour).

Resources

The best time to start communicating sexual health information with your child is in the early stages of development. 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. Take time to find accurate answers to your child's questions and return to the conversation when you feel comfortable and prepared.

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 their personal preference.

Below is a list of recommended websites:

1. Teaching Sexual Health for Parents
<http://teachingsexualhealth.ca/parents>
2. Stages of Child Sexual Development
<https://www.centreforsexuality.ca/learning-centre/stages-of-child-sexual-development/>
3. It's Easier Than You Think: Tips for Talking With Your Kids About Sexual Health
<https://skprevention.ca/sexual-health/information-for-parents/>