



MESSAGES FOR PARENTS

2-5 Years

At this age, many children will:

- Identify their own gender and the gender of others.
- Begin to participate in role play and activities to explore aspects of sexuality (e.g., pretending to be “Mommy” or “Daddy”, playing house or doctor).
- Be curious about the genitals of peers and adults of the same and opposite sex.
- Be able to understand the basic elements of human reproduction.

Healthy Sexual Development

- Avoid instilling a sense of guilt or shame. Do not scold your child for demonstrating normal developmental behaviours such as talking about body parts or attempting to see other people when they are naked or undressing.
- Understand that your reaction to the opposite sex or nudity will influence your child’s perception of sexuality, gender, and sexual behaviour.
- Explain privacy to your child, including the difference between public and private acts (e.g., places for undressing, touching their genitals).
- 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, including genitals
- that their body belongs to them
- that they have a right to privacy and the right to say “no” to unwanted touch or behaviours
- the difference between appropriate and inappropriate touch

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/>