



MESSAGES FOR PARENTS

13-16 Years

At this age, many children will:

- Understand or begin exploring their sexual orientation (which gender(s) they are attracted to).
- Have “crushes”, romantic feelings, or begin dating.
- Be preoccupied with sexuality (e.g., interest in sexual media) and body image.
- Start to engage in sexual activities as a way to physically express sexual and romantic feelings and to give or receive pleasure.

Healthy Sexual Development

- Talk to your child about safer sex practices, including how to prevent pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections through the use of condoms and birth control.
- Encourage your child to see a healthcare provider to learn about the choices available for prevention of sexually transmitted infections and unplanned pregnancies.
- Provide an environment that promotes self-esteem and positive body image.
- Remain interested in your child’s relationships. Provide opportunities for discussions about healthy choices in relationships, including the importance of consent.

Promotion of Sexual Health and Prevention of Sexual Abuse

- Watch for early signs of premature sexual activities as well as overly sexualized behaviours.
- Encourage a healthy lifestyle and positive relationships.
- Substance use can affect healthy decisions, including those related to sexual behaviours. Educate your child about drugs and alcohol so they can make informed choices.

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/>