

Learning About My Body

TWO TO FIVE YEARS OF AGE



The Saskatchewan Prevention Institute recognizes the importance of being inclusive, including using inclusive language. As such, gender-neutral language is used whenever possible in this book. When the terms "male" and "female" are used, it is with the purpose of referring to sex-related biological features (internal and external anatomy), not to gender identity.

saskatchewan
preventioninstitute
our goal is **healthy** children

1319 Colony Street, Saskatoon, SK S7N 2Z1

Bus. 306.651.4300

Fax. 306.651.4301

© Copyright 2024, Saskatchewan Prevention Institute

RESOURCE 7-210

Revised 06/2024

Dear Parents/Caregivers,

You are the most important influence in your child's life. You pass on your culture, beliefs, values, and knowledge to your child. You know how important it is to care for your child's mental, physical, emotional, and social well-being - all of which are related to their sexual health. Although many people believe that sexuality begins with puberty, sexual development actually begins at birth. In infancy, children form attachments with caregivers and begin to learn the proper names of body parts. As children grow and develop, they begin to understand gender identity and gender roles, different types of relationships, privacy, and family, cultural, and moral values. Sexual development also involves learning information and skills to prevent and protect themselves from unhealthy relationships and sexual abuse.

Parents and caregivers are the first and primary educators of children, and this includes sexual health. Parents and caregivers can teach children both directly through specific conversations and indirectly through daily interactions. The best time to start communicating sexual health information to your child is when they are a baby. Starting early not only helps your baby, but also helps you become more comfortable talking about sexual health with your child. As children become school-aged, many will receive information from school on relevant sexual health topics. However, parents and caregivers continue to have an important role in reinforcing these messages.

This book was developed by the Saskatchewan Prevention Institute to support you in your role as your child's sexual health educator. In particular, this book helps you share important messages with your child about their development and bodies.

If you have any concerns or questions about your child's development, please talk to your public health nurse or primary care provider.

Sexual Health Development Between 2 to 5 Years Old

At this stage of development, children will have become quite familiar with their own bodies. Children may start to become more interested and curious about the bodies of others, both adults and children.

Children will identify their own gender and recognize the genders of people around them. As part of this development, curiosity about the genitals and genders of peers may be seen in the form of games such as “I’ll show you mine, if you show me yours”, trying out roles such as “Mommy” and “Daddy”, and playing doctor or house. This is part of the gender identity and gender role development of a child.

Questions about human reproduction may come in the form of “Where did I come from?” or “Where do babies come from?” Children may be curious at the sight of a pregnant person. Providing age-appropriate and accurate explanations to children is important to educate them and prevent misinformation. This information serves as a building block for future learning.

Parents should continue to use and teach accurate names for body parts to children, including genitals. Teaching children about privacy, including the differences between public and private acts (e.g., places for undressing, touching their genitals), is important during this stage of development. Parents should also teach children that their body belongs to them, and that they have the right to say “no” to unwanted touch or behaviours.

How to Use This Book

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 book, the more they will remember the messages.
4. Reinforce the messages from this book in everyday life. For instance, remind your child about the proper names of body parts and the importance of asking permission to touch or hug others.

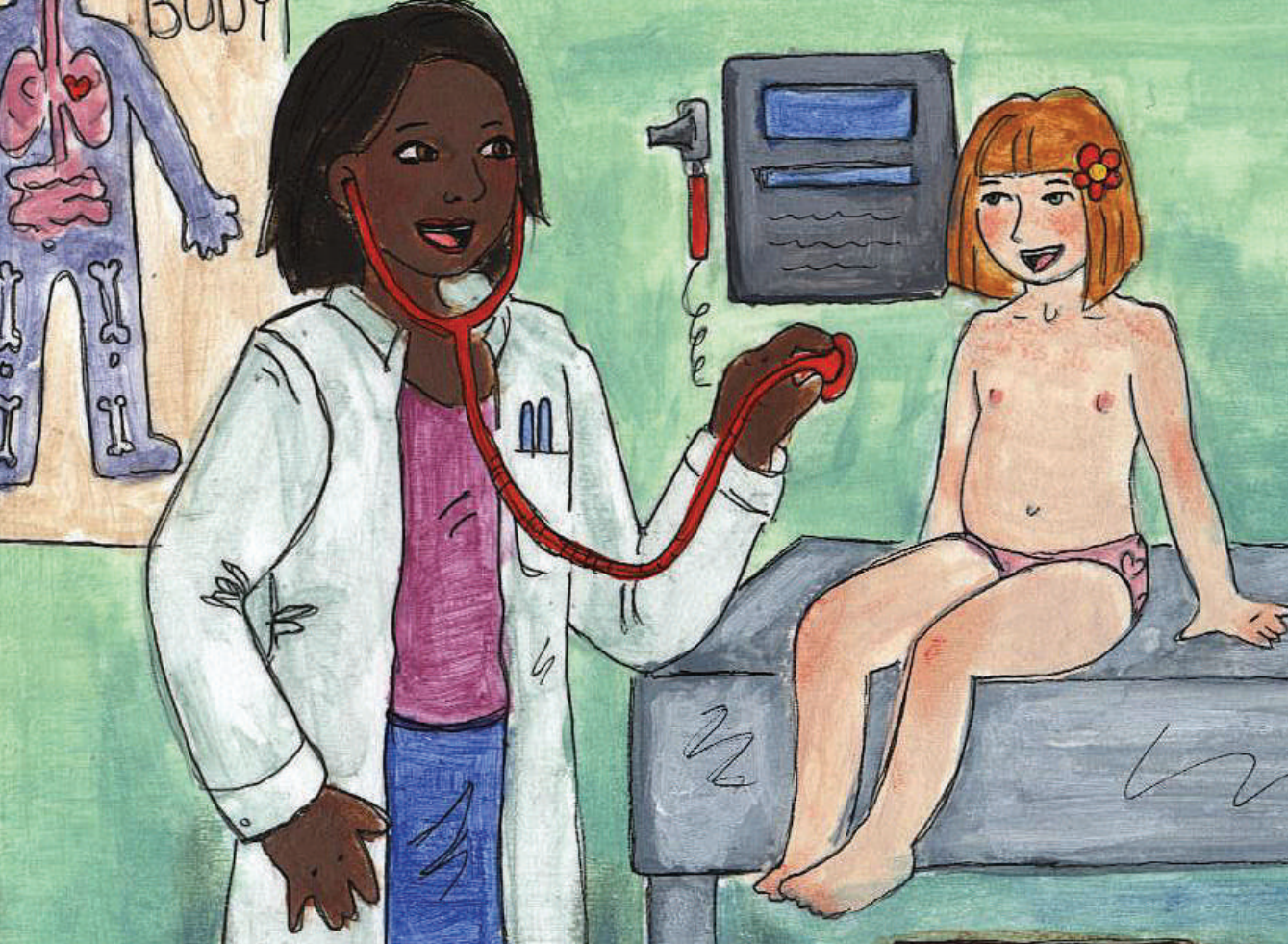


Here are Sarah and Mitch. They see that they look alike in some ways and different in some ways. They both have a head, hair, ears, eyes, a nose, shoulders, arms, hands, a chest, a belly button, legs, and feet. Sarah is a female and has a vulva. Mitch is a male and has a penis.



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. Mommy 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.



Jamie is at the doctor's office for a checkup. Before touching Jamie, the doctor will ask if it is okay. Touch is important for the doctor to learn about Jamie's health. Mommy tells Jamie that no one should touch our bodies without asking first. Mommy reminds Jamie to always tell a trusted adult if someone's touch feels bad. The adults that Jamie feels safe with can help.



Lesley is sitting at the bathroom door. Lesley loves her big sister, Debbie. 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 everyone can play and have lots of fun together. They are learning to respect each other's bodies and ask before they touch or hug each other.

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:

An Overview of Healthy Childhood Sexual Development, National Sexual Violence Resource Center

<https://www.nsvrc.org/publications/an-overview-on-healthy-childhood-sexual-development>

It's Easier Than You Think: Tips for Talking With Your Kids About Sexual Health, Saskatchewan Prevention Institute

<https://skprevention.ca/sexual-health/information-for-parents/>

Sexual Development and Behavior in Children: Information for Parents and Caregivers, The National Child Traumatic Stress Network

https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/sexual_development_and_behavior_in_children.pdf

Supporting Your Child's Positive Sexual Development, Centre for Sexuality

<https://www.centreforsexuality.ca/learning-centre/stages-of-child-sexual-development/>

Teaching Sexual Health for Parents

<https://teachingsexualhealth.ca/parents/>

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

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

www.skprevention.ca