

Young Children (0-7)

You may think it is too early to begin communicating with your young child about sex and sexuality, but there are topics that can be covered now to help protect your child and lay the groundwork for a lifetime of healthy communication.

Infants and Toddlers need and want information about:

- Their bodies and the differences between boys and girls
- Privacy and private touching- to protect them from possible sexual abuse
- Where babies come from

10 Tips for Communicating with Young Children about Sexuality and Protecting Them from Abuse:

1. Use correct terminology for all body parts. This way, there is no confusion. If needed, they could talk to their doctor or other trusted adult without any confusion.
2. Introduce the concepts of privacy and private parts. Give your child ownership of his/her body.
3. Teach your child to set personal boundaries and say “no” if she/he is uncomfortable. Praise them when they do.
4. React to body exploration and/or masturbation between children by normalizing their curiosity, and suggest other ways to learn about bodies (books, etc.). Avoid reacting with anger or shame.
5. Answer children’s questions simply but honestly, giving age-appropriate information. Check out our list of suggested books if you are having trouble finding the right words.
6. Take advantage of “teachable moments.” Examples include: teaching body parts during bath time, pointing out good examples of self-esteem and assertiveness in television or movies, etc.
7. Teach your child that “secret” means “come tell me right away.”
8. Ask your child about his/her activities while away from you.
9. Supervise all activities. Investigate child care thoroughly.
10. Remember: Your child’s self-esteem and safety is more important than any adult’s embarrassment or hurt feelings.

Resources

Books:

Bellybuttons Are Navels, by Mark Schoen.

How You Were Born, by Joanna Cole

It's My Body, by Lory Freeman.

It's So Amazing, by Robie Harris.

My Body Belongs to Me, by Kristin Baird

What's the Big Secret? Talking about Sex with Girls and Boys, by Laurie Krasny Brown and Marc Brown

Where Did I Come From? by Peter Mayle.

Where Do Babies Come From? by Angela Royston.

Why is Mommy's Tummy so Big? by Mary Atkinson.

First Comes Love, by Jennifer Davis