

Why Now?

- Education promotes sexual maturity
- Knowledge is protection
- It takes time

Stages of Sexual Development

Magical Thinkers – Preschoolers (Ages 2–4)

- They will make up stories when they do not have factual information
- They need information repeated
- They have no emotional baggage
- They accept information in a matter-of-fact way

Things to Talk About...

- The names for genitals – penis, testicles, scrotum, anus, vulva, labia, vagina, clitoris, uterus, ovaries
- Reproduction happens when a man’s sperm joins a woman’s ovum by sexual intercourse
- The baby grows in the uterus
- The baby is born through the vagina
- Basics of menses and nocturnal emissions as a clean and healthy process
- Not to pick up needles or condoms

The Bathroom Humor Types – Primaries (Gr. 1–3)

- Often confuse the digestive and reproductive systems
- Display mechanical curiosity
- Have the ability to ask without shame or hesitation
- Accept the information they are given and move on
- Will sometimes ask mechanical-type questions because something has happened to them
- Need to learn about puberty because they or someone they know may be an “early starter”

Things to Talk About...

- Additional scientific words – urine, stool, bladder, urethra
- The distinction between the digestive and reproductive systems
- Full information about menses and nocturnal emissions
- Basic/introductory information about body changes at puberty

The “Gross-me-outers” – Intermediates (Gr. 4-7)

- Intermediates are the most curious group about sexual health
- It is often a parent’s last chance to teach about sexual health
- Development of personal boundaries and modesty begins
- The demand for privacy begins
- They are fascinated by pregnancy, miscarriages, handicaps, abnormalities, multiples, and congenitally joined twins
- Correct and factual terms are very important to avoid misconceptions (ie. pregnancy can occur by “sleeping together”)
- Information about puberty and hygiene are important

Things to Talk About...

- All about body changes at puberty
- Basic information about STI’s
- False and exaggerated sexuality portrayed in pornography and the exploitation of participants
- The understanding that one does not have to be a sexually active teen
- The distorted, popular, commercialized views of the “perfect body”

The People Who Don’t Know That They Don’t Know – Teens(Gr. 7-12)

- They begin to think it is not cool to ask questions
- May need books or other private ways to learn more about sexuality
- They want to talk
- Are more likely to engage in risky behaviour if they are not educated

Things to Talk About...

- Proper use of contraceptive devices and their potential failure
- Detailed information about STI’s

Also Work to Develop...

- An understanding of intimate relationships
- Relationship skills
- Refusal skills
- Confidence when going to a doctor

Sexually Mature Adult

- Are comfortable with their own bodies and do the exams expected by doctors
- Experience no exploitation or abuse in relationships
- Demonstrate a respect and understanding of society’s laws, taboos, and boundaries around sexuality

Scientific Terms

- Using scientific terms for all body parts is important
- When used from an early age, parents are more comfortable with the scientific terms by the time children reach the question-asking stage
- Practice by yourself/with a partner

Answering Questions

- Never lose your sense of humor
- Do not wait until your child asks to share information. They may never ask and this can send the message that the topic is taboo or off limits.
- “Talk until their eyes glaze over”. They will take in what they can/need to.
- Know that the information will need to be repeated and reviewed.
- Don’t be mad at questions your child may ask
- Bedtime is a good time for discussion
- Praise maturity
- Set expectations for good manners – remember they won’t always get it right

Sample Responses...

- “I don’t know the answer to that, but lets find out together.”
- “I need time to think about this. I promise we will talk about it after... (ex. supper)”
- “My parents never talked about this with me, but I’m really proud that you asked me and I’m going to do my best to answer your question.”
- “I am really proud of you for asking this question and I know that you are grown-up enough to have a scientific answer. But perhaps it would not be a good idea to go to school tomorrow and tell everyone what we’ve talked about. Some parents like to tell their children themselves and their children haven’t asked them yet.”
- “If you want to know more sometime, be sure to ask me again. I’m really proud of you and your question.”

Question Examples...

1. How big can a penis get?

The size of an adult male's penis varies from one man to the next. On average, a man's penis is 3 and a half to 4 inches in length when soft, and 5 to 7 inches in length when erect.

2. What happens when a boy has big breasts?

Almost half of all boys experience a temporary swelling of the breasts during puberty because of hormones. This swelling goes away over time. If a boy is concerned about this, it is a good idea for him to talk to his doctor.

3. What is the importance of pubic hair?

Hair, no matter where it is on the body, helps to protect our bodies and regulate our body temperature.

4. Why is semen sticky?

Semen is sticky because one of its ingredients is sugar or fructose. Sugar is one of the ingredients in semen that provides energy for the sperm.

5. If a girl is 13 and flat as a board. When will she develop?

Breast development is a common concern for girls your age. There is no set time for when a girl's breasts will start to grow and develop. Breasts start to increase in size somewhere between the ages of 9 and 15. Do your best to be patient with your body and not compare yourself with others. Everyone goes through puberty at exactly the right time for their body.

7. Why do girls have their periods?

The uterus must prepare for growth of a baby if fertilization occurs. Hormones from ovaries send a message to the uterus to grow a thick, soft lining of tissue and blood. This lining contains nutrients that would be needed to nourish the fertilized ovum. If the egg is not fertilized in the fallopian tube, the lining is not needed to nourish the baby, so the uterus will shed the lining.

8. What is the average age to get your period?

Menstruation can begin as early as 8 or as late as 16. Every girl has her own internal clock.

10. What can't you do when you have your period?

When you are menstruating, you can do anything you want to do. You can play sports, dance, exercise and bathe like usual. If tampons are used, you can even swim. Menstruation is a normal and healthy part of life. You can carry on with your normal activities. However, some girls and women do experience cramping and heavy bleeding that can make them feel very uncomfortable. If the symptoms you experience prevent you from doing exercise and joining in with your friends you may want to discuss this with a parent or trusted adult. Visiting your family doctor may put your mind at rest.

11. Are tampons safe?

Tampons are safe if used correctly. Using tampons the right way can prevent a rare but serious infection called Toxic Shock Syndrome (TSS). Some symptoms of TSS are: headache; sore throat; sudden fever; vomiting; diarrhoea; achy muscles; and a sunburn-looking red rash. To prevent TSS, tampons should be changed every 4–8 hours, no matter how light the bleeding is. Because tampons should never be left in for longer than 8 hours, some women choose to wear a pad at night. Also, avoid using super absorbent tampons.