
Tips for Initiating “The Talk”

Having “the talk” with your kids doesn’t have to be uncomfortable. It will be easier to talk to your own kids about sex as they grow older if you make conversations about healthy sexuality a regular, normal part of your relationship with them now. Instead of giving them lots of information all at once, answer specific questions as they arise. The earlier you start, the better!

Talking With Tweens about Sex:

- Tweens are curious about sex and romantic relationships, but are also less likely to ask you those questions. You’ll need to take initiative. Car rides can be a perfect venue for one-on-one conversations because you have each other’s undivided attention.
- Seize opportune moments to talk. Movies or T.V. shows that contain content about sexual relationships are good icebreakers for conversation.
- Emphasize that all human beings are unique. Everyone’s experiences of sexual development will be somewhat different—from menstruation to physical maturation, to feelings of arousal and attraction, masturbation, and the potential physical and emotional consequences of sexual activity.

Talking With Teens about Sex:

- Let your kids know that abstinence is the only 100 percent, effective way to prevent pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), including HIV/AIDS, herpes, chlamydia, and human papilloma virus (HPV), and that if they do engage in sexual activity, they should use birth control and condoms.
- Ask your family physician to talk to your kids about STDs during their regular well-child exams.
- Teach your kids about the nature and consequences of STDs, including the fact that transmission is not limited to sexual intercourse.
- Remind teens that romantic and sexual behaviors fall along a continuum from safe to emotionally and physically vulnerable. Encourage your teens to explore their sexual and romantic feelings toward others in ways that protect their own and their partners’ emotional and physical health.
- Ask your teenagers whether their peers are sexually active. Explain that research studies have shown many teens think more of their peers are sexually active than actually are. And be aware that the most common form of sexual activity among young people these days is oral sex (sometimes between people who consider themselves “just friends”). Young people often think of this as “safer” sex because pregnancy isn’t one of its risks.