

## AGES THREE TO FOUR

Children may:

- begin to establish a clear idea about gender
- try to look at people when they are nude or undressing
- enjoy examining their genitals and self-pleasuring (masturbation)
- learn sex words including bathroom and swear words
- be curious about how babies are made and born

## AGES FIVE TO EIGHT

Children may:

- learn what is acceptable and unacceptable to adults
- use sexual language to shock or impress friends
- continue sexual exploration
- continue self-pleasuring (masturbation)
- try to look at people when they are undressing or at pictures of naked people
- become modest or shy about their bodies



## AGES NINE TO TWELVE

Children may:

- continue sexual exploration and self-pleasuring (masturbation)
- seek out same-sex peer groups; tease and chase children of the opposite sex
- start to show signs of puberty
- be more easily affected by friends and the media, including increased exposure to sexual images on the Internet
- have fantasies and crushes on people who are their age or older, the same or opposite sex

## A WORD ABOUT TEENS

It is a normal part of development for teens to pull away from their parents while still being emotionally tied to them. You have already laid the foundation for the challenges of adolescence by the values and attitudes you have taught your child. Don't be afraid to explain your feelings to your teen and set limits. Let them know you are there to talk whenever they need to.

## OTHER RESOURCES

Visit [sexualityandu.ca](http://sexualityandu.ca) (click on "parents") for reliable information from the Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada.

For more information or to speak with a Sexual Health Nurse, call 625-5976 or 1-888-294-6630, ext. 5976.

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Kids are curious. This brochure will help you decide how you want to teach your child about sexuality.

# Parents are their children's most important sex educators.

Learning about sexuality is a lifelong process and should start when a child is young.

## THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Who talked to you about sex and what was that like?
- What are your own attitudes about sexuality?
- Have you thought about the way you want to talk with your child?

## WHY TEACH SEXUALITY

- Children are curious about their bodies and sexuality.
- Children see things around them that are confusing. As they grow, they learn about sexuality from many sources, both positive and negative: TV, Internet, movies and friends.
- When you welcome their questions, children learn that they can come to you, that it's OK to talk about these things.
- Children learn from you what it

- Children need your guidance to learn which sexual behaviours are acceptable and which are not.
- It's important for children to learn their family and cultural values.

## GENERAL TIPS

- Whenever a child asks a question, respond, even if the reply is "Good question. Let's talk about that later." (But don't forget!)
- Find a time and place that is comfortable for both of you.
- When there is an opportunity – take it.
- Be honest. If you don't tell and they find out, they may no longer trust your information. They could also be embarrassed by repeating incorrect information in front of others, who might make fun of them.
- Let the child know when you feel uncomfortable, embarrassed or you don't know an answer. It's OK.
- Some children will ask questions, but others will hesitate. You may need to start the conversation.

- Clarify what your child really wants to know before you answer.
- Make your answers honest, short and simple. You don't need to know everything about sex to teach your child what he or she wants to know. What you don't know, you can find out.
- Give information using words and ideas they can understand at their age.
- Find out how much your child already knows; and don't be surprised by what they already know.



## AGES AND STAGES

There are common sexual behaviours for children at different ages. Some of these behaviours are linked to curiosity, others to sexual feelings.

## BIRTH TO TWO YEARS

Children may:

- explore body parts, including the genitals
- experience pleasure from touch to all body parts including their genitals
- begin to develop a positive or negative attitude towards their own body
- start to learn expectations of behaviours for boys and girls