

Talk soon. Talk often.

A guide for parents talking to their kids about sex.

1. Talk soon. Talk often.
Listen too.



2. Offer lots of little conversations over time from toddlerhood to teenhood, not one 'big talk'.

3. Start talking about bodies when your child is an infant, and use the correct names for body parts: penis, testes, scrotum, vulva, vagina, breasts.

4. Sexual health is not just about having sex, it's bodies, babies, growing up, being a girl, being a boy, love, sexual expression, feelings, personal values, decisions and relationships.

Fact: Puberty can start at 8 (mostly at 10 or 11), and can continue until 18 (but can be later).

5. Do not just wait for your children to ask questions.

6. Take advantage of teachable moments. Use prompts from TV, magazines, experiences with friends, music and the Internet to start conversations and 'hypotheticals'.

7. Answer questions honestly and simply. Just a little bit of information is OK because you can always come back to it (and you should).

8. Good communication needs two-way talk, not one-way lectures.



Fact: By the end of Year 12, about 50% of young people have had sex. And 50% have not had sex.

9. Be a 'tellable' parent – make yourself available, unshockable and listen.



10. It's never too late to start. If you are feeling self-conscious, avoid eye-contact and start a conversation when you're in the car or doing the dishes.

11. Don't assume every child is heterosexual: about 10% of the population will be same-sex attracted.

12. If you don't know how to respond to a question it is OK to say so. Say something like, 'That's a good question. I don't know how to answer it. I'll find out and get back to you,' or 'We can find out together'.

Fact: Research shows: children who talk about sexuality with their parents start having sex later.

13. Continue to show your child affection even when they are going through puberty. Regular hugs can communicate a lot.

14. Find out when and what your child is learning at school about sexual health so you can be prepared.

15. Let your kids know about using condoms even if you disapprove of them having sex.

16. Leave age-appropriate brochures and books with accurate information on sexuality around for your children to read.