

# 5 TIPS



on talking to your children  
about healthy sexuality

## Start Early

If you haven't had conversations with your children, it's OK! They still need accurate information, guidance, and support, so there are always opportunities to open a conversation with your children at any age about healthy sexuality.

Affirm that the body is a good and special thing, but keep the conversation age-appropriate.

## Allow Yourself to Feel Uncomfortable

You may feel nervous or uncomfortable, especially if these are new conversations. You can admit this to your child — it can show you will be open and honest with them (it might even help ease some of the tension). Ask yourself why you feel nervous: Is it because you never had these conversations with your own parents? Is it because you do not have all the answers? Consider sharing the reasons for your feelings with your children.

## Teach Them About Private Behavior

If your child is touching his or her genitals in public, make sure your child is aware of the behavior; acknowledge that it feels good but that such activity is to be done in private, and help your child identify "public" and "private" spaces. It's helpful to talk about this as simply as possible and without shaming. Remember, you want your child to know how his or her body works and what brings pleasure.

## Take Initiative

Sexuality can be a difficult or uncomfortable subject to talk about with your children, so they may not come to you with questions or concerns. But it does get easier with practice — for both you and your children. Talk with all of your children, regardless of gender or age. These conversations may occur when many young people are trying to become more independent, so they may push you away or seem to pay little attention, but you are still critically important in their lives.

## Use Correct Words

Using correct words gives the message that body parts and their functions are natural. Using proper terminology helps do away with the idea that our bodies and sexuality are shameful, embarrassing, or bad.

If a young child repeats a sexual obscenity, parents and adult caregivers should explain what it means without being afraid to use the word.



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