

Why Start the Conversation?

Talking about relationships and sex with young people can be hard. Many people feel embarrassed, shamed or nervous talking about sex, and may not be used to using the type of language needed to talk openly. However, we do know how important it is that young people get the correct information to avoid unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections and unwanted sex.

Talking about sexual health with young people will not encourage them have sex. It is about giving them the correct information and skills to make their own smart and safe decisions. In fact, studies have shown that children who receive comprehensive sex education are more likely to delay their first instance of sexual activity.

Parents play a huge role in providing accurate information to young people as the information they may receive from peers, the internet, television and the media may not always be correct.

Some other Reasons to Talk

- Young people want to know! They are naturally curious and want to learn.
- It helps them make better choices
- It helps them cope with puberty
- Don't assume they are learning about sex at school. Many school based programs focus only on reproduction and some, especially religious schools, don't teach sexual education at all
- It provides correct information, rather than what they see on TV in the media, or from their friends. Many myths about sex, STIs, pregnancy and HIV abound in the playground!
- It helps young people feel more comfortable with having the conversations. Start young and the conversations won't be so embarrassing later on!

When to start the conversation

Start the conversation earlier, rather than later. There are lots of different ways and topics you can start to talk about before your child reaches high school such as:

- Body parts
- Puberty
- Respectful relationships
- Contraception
- Pregnancy and birth
- Sex and the law including sexting and pornography
- Sexually transmissible infections, including HIV

There lots of information and resources around these topics to help support you.

Checkout *Talk Soon Talk Often* and *Yarning Quiet Ways*.

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TALKING TO YOUR KIDS ABOUT SEX & HIV



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Tips for starting the conversation

- Start early. There's a range of age appropriate content that can be discussed from an early age (see Talk Soon Talk Often), and remember it's never too late to start talking even if you think they know some things. It's always good to check in
- Don't wait for the young person to start the conversation. Introduce books, characters, TV shows and stories which may create more conversation and questions
- Don't feel like you need to have all the answers. Saying: 'I'll find out for you', or 'Let's look it up together' is just as good.
- Talk often. It shouldn't be just a once off conversation and 'phew, it's done'. Talk regularly and check in with the young person over time as they may have thought of new questions after the conversation
- Have relevant information around the house—books, pamphlets, etc
- It's OK to have laugh and share stories together
- Always be up for the conversations—you never know when the right time may be if you wait for it, it may never come
- Include masturbation, touching, kissing and oral sex in your conversations, not just penis in vagina sex for reproduction
- Include conversations about consent
- Include conversations about abstinence—it's perfectly ok and is the only 100% effective contraception!
- For older children, having condoms around the house – a supply in a shared bathroom for example – will allow them to use them without having to ask you, or worse, a shop assistant!

Age Appropriate Conversation Ideas

0-2

- Correct terms for body parts
- Appropriate touching of themselves in public

2-5

- The basics of reproduction, without details
- The difference between genitals

5-9

- More information on reproduction, including a simple explanation of how the sperm and the egg come together
- Consent – learning that it is ok to say 'no' to unwanted touching
- Discussion of harmful stereotypes about how girls and boys 'should' act
- Introduction to upcoming changes to their bodies during puberty

9-13

- Deeper discussion of changes to their bodies during puberty. Include what will be happening to others as well
- Emphasise everyone is normal, and develops at different rates
- Normalise same-sex couples and same-sex attractions.
- Porn and its reflection of fantasy, not reality
- Erections and wet dreams
- Periods
- Consent
- Risky behaviours
- Body autonomy
- Healthy v unhealthy relationships

13-19

- The pressure to have sex
- The peer pressure to 'fit in'
- Body image
- Tattoos, piercings and HIV
- Enthusiastic consent in a sexual setting
- Sexually transmitted infections
- Condoms
- Contraception options
- Alternate forms of sexual activity, such as kissing, masturbation etc that does not involve penetration
- Porn and its reflection of fantasy, not reality
- Healthy v unhealthy sexual relationships
- Drugs and alcohol and their impact on decision making

Useful Contacts:

Parents

Talk soon, talk often

www.healthywa.wa.gov.au/talksoontalkoften

Let's Yarn!

www.letsyarn.health.wa.gov.au

Teachers

RELATE – respectful relationships education

<http://shq.org.au/relate/>

Doin 'it' Right

<http://www.ahmrc.org.au/>

Students

Get the Facts

www.getthefacts.health.wa.gov.au

Could I have it?

www.couldihaveit.com.au

Safe Sex No Regrets

<http://www.safesexnoregrets.com.au>

