

GET YOURSELF TALKING ABOUT SEXUAL HEALTH

THE HIGH SCHOOL YEARS

WHERE YOUR CHILD IS...

Physically:

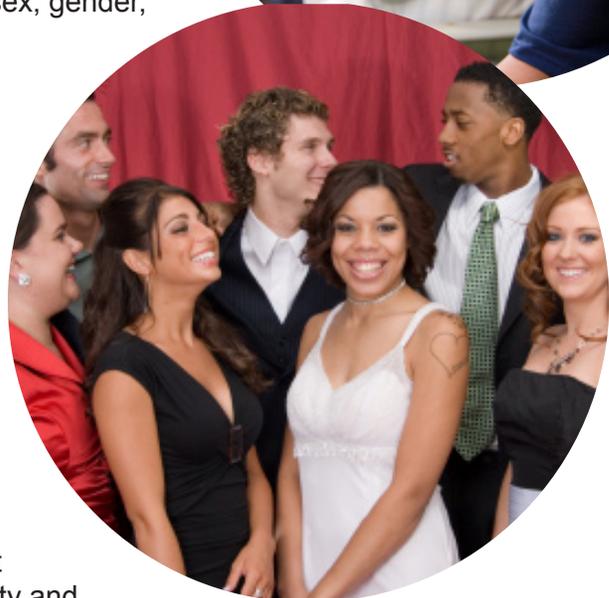
- Still completing adult physical growth and development
- Increasing fertility for girls as their menstrual cycles become more regular
- Experiencing elevated sexual drive for both genders
- Masturbating may be a regular activity
- Sexual experiences may become more frequent and intimate

Intellectually:

- Giving more weight to their own thoughts and opinions
- Seeing themselves increasingly as their own primary decision maker (instead of family or peers)
- Developing enhanced analytical skills
- Able to actively critique media messages, rather than taking them at face value; still susceptible to media messages about sex, gender, and attractiveness
- Understanding the risks associated with certain sexual behaviors in greater depth, but they may not apply that understanding to personal decisions because of feelings of invincibility
- Still needing adult check-ins and supervision because of their limited life experience, intense social pressures, desire to be and act more grown up, and/or potential alcohol or other drug use

Emotionally/Socially:

- Greater understanding of reasons behind emotions and motivations behind behavior
- Increasing knowledge about the characteristics of healthy and unhealthy relationships
- Generally less concerned with appearance as the most important factor in judging attractiveness (i.e. personality and common interests or values are gradually seen as having more importance)
- Increasing desire for longer and more involved relationships; greater capacity for selflessness, give-and-take, and intimacy
- Usually less judgmental about others' sexual/romantic choices



Directions: Cut along the outside edge and fold at the crease to make your bookmark. Use as a guide for talking with your child about sexual health topics.

PARENT'S QUICK GUIDE TO TALKING ABOUT SEXUAL HEALTH: The High School Years

INFO TO PROVIDE

The range of sexual behaviors people engage in and their associated physical, social, and emotional risks

All available options for protecting themselves and others from sexually transmitted infections and pregnancy

People must always respect their own and others' sexual boundaries ('no' means 'no')

How to recognize when their boundaries aren't being respected and how to remove themselves from unsafe situations

MESSAGES TO GIVE

"Because of the potentially serious risks involved, it is wise to postpone oral, anal, or vaginal sex until you've reached an adult level of maturity."

"Sexual experiences are enjoyable and can be fulfilling in appropriate contexts--like being in a positive, caring, and trusting relationship." (If you want, you can specify "when you are married.")



GOOD TIMES TO TALK

When viewing television, movies, or other media

During or after visits to healthcare providers

When talking about emotions and relationships

When talking about boundaries

When talking about how to make healthy decisions

During conversations about being assertive

CONVERSATIONS ABOUT SEX AND VALUES

At this point in their development, teens are starting to develop their personal moral codes and can understand nuances in different situations. Here are some topics that may lead to good discussions:

The importance of kindness, respect, and responsibility in intimate, and other relationships

How to identify exploitive behaviors and understanding why they are wrong

Sexual and gender diversity exist; tolerance and inclusiveness are important values

How you will support them in their decisions and the consequences that occur

PARENT'S QUICK GUIDE TO TALKING ABOUT SEXUAL HEALTH: The High School Years

