

GET YOURSELF TALKING ABOUT SEXUAL HEALTH

THE MIDDLE SCHOOL YEARS

WHERE YOUR CHILD IS...

Physically:

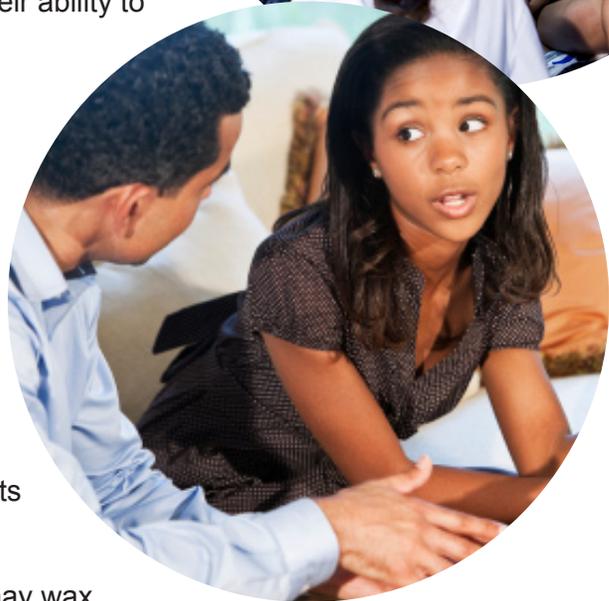
- Experiencing a growth spurt
- Producing hormones that gradually create changes in body shape and functioning
- Likely experiencing first period/first ejaculation, signaling the capacity to reproduce
- Likely masturbating and/or fantasizing about others in a romantic or sexual way

Intellectually:

- Continuing to establish independence, develop their own opinions, and assume greater responsibility for themselves
- Developing more sophisticated decision-making skills, but still needing adult presence and supervision
- Needing adults to treat them with greater respect for their ability to think and make some decisions on their own

Emotionally/Socially:

- Experiencing feelings of insecurity because of physical changes and the desire to fit in with peers
- Wondering frequently if they—and their thoughts, desires, feelings, bodies, behaviors—are normal; may be struggling with internal conflicts regarding sexual orientation (e.g. “straight” or “gay”)
- Placing higher priority on peer relationships; some of these begin taking on new dimensions of sexual and/or romantic interest
- Increasingly self-conscious and self-centered, but beginning to understand and appreciate the components of caring and trusting relationships
- Experiencing unexpected mood-swings that can create challenges for parents and others; their relationships may wax and wane with greater frequency
- Desiring greater privacy and space away from parents and other family members
- Often feeling embarrassed or uncomfortable about sexual topics because those are becoming more “real”; more hesitant when asking parents and other adults questions about sexual health and sexuality
- Wondering “how far” people their age should go sexually, and making comparisons with others about who “likes” whom and who’s done what sexually; labeling others regarding appearance and sexual activity is also common



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 Middle School Years

INFO TO PROVIDE

How to maintain a positive self-concept in a time of great change

Information about risks of oral, anal, or vaginal sexual contact and how to prevent sexually transmitted infections and pregnancy

MESSAGES TO GIVE

"It may not feel comfortable at times, but puberty and these changes you're experiencing are all normal."

"It's okay if you are (or are not) going through puberty now. Everyone develops at his or her own pace."

"I will respect your need for privacy, and I also want you to know you can always talk to me. I'm here for you."

"You're beginning to look more like an adult and have adult feelings, but you also still have a lot of developing left to do. Engaging in risky sexual behaviors like oral, anal, or vaginal sexual contact at this time in your life is beyond your ability to manage physically or emotionally."



GOOD TIMES TO TALK

When your child worries about not being attractive

When talking to your child about health

When your child asks about body changes

When your child worries about not looking like their friends

When your child says they don't want to talk about something

When setting boundaries with your child

As your child becomes interested in romantic relationships



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