

GET YOURSELF TALKING ABOUT SEXUAL HEALTH

THE EARLY CHILDHOOD & ELEMENTARY SCHOOL YEARS

WHERE YOUR CHILD IS...

Physically:

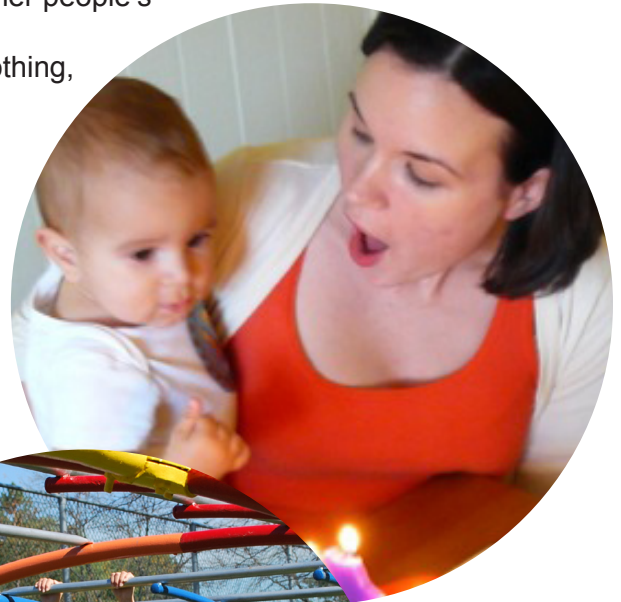
- Learning to control bodily functions (e.g. toilet training)
- Exploring what their genitals look like and how they feel
- Exploring what those sexual body parts look like on other people's bodies (parents, siblings, "playing doctor" with age-mates)
- Engaging in self-pleasuring periodically as a form of self-soothing, tension release, and/or enjoyment

Intellectually:



- Understanding and developing the ability to use language, including language for sexual and reproductive parts
- Wondering about their own origins, asking questions like "Where did I come from?" "How did I get out of there?" "How did I get in there in the first place?"
- Developing an understanding of social roles, including gender roles
- Learning that the world around them projects different behavioral expectations for girls and boys, and that often boys and girls are considered "opposites"

Emotionally/Socially:

- Developing an understanding and appreciation of trust, first in regard to family members and caretakers, and later in regard to people outside the family unit
- Gradually testing out social and emotional independence, including building stronger relationships with peers during the elementary school years
- Forming relationships with male and female peers, based largely around learned gender roles
- Forming basic attitudes and beliefs about sex, often acquired from peers and mass media
- Needing ongoing input and clarification from trusted adults about images, ideas, attitudes, and beliefs regarding sex and gender to which they are constantly exposed



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 Early Childhood/Elementary Years	<p>INFO TO PROVIDE</p> <p>The correct names for major body parts (internal and external), including sexual and reproductive parts</p> <p>Basic information about how babies are conceived, how they grow, and how they are born</p> <p>MESSAGES TO GIVE</p> <p>"Your body is a gift. Make sure you take care of it."</p> <p>"Yes boys' and girls' bodies are different in a few ways, but mostly boys and girls are alike."</p> <p>"While touching your genitals feels good, we keep those body parts private most of the time and should touch them only when we are in private."</p> <p>"Difference is a good thing and something we can learn from. If someone acts, dresses, or likes things that are different from you, you should respect those differences. This includes their sexual orientation (e.g. "straight" or "gay")."</p> <p>"I'm here for you if you have any questions about your body or sex."</p> <p>"There are many different types of families, and they all deserve respect."</p> <p>"No matter who it is, you can tell that person 'no' if they're touching you in a way you don't like. And you should respect others' 'no's.' Always come and tell me if you have been in an uncomfortable situation."</p> 	<p>GOOD TIMES TO TALK</p> <p>When charting your child's growth</p> <p>When singing or playing a game like "Head, Shoulders, Knees, Toes..."</p> <p>When your child is looking at siblings' or parents' bodies</p> <p>Whenever your child asks, when adults decide to bring up the subject, or when a good opportunity presents itself ("That woman is pregnant. Do you know what that means?")</p> <p>When talking to your child about public and private behavior or public versus private spaces <i>(Note: Children do not fully understand these ideas until they are five or six)</i></p> <p>When talking to your child about teasing and bullying</p> <p>When asking questions about his/her body</p> <p>As your child meets children in different family types</p> <p>When talking about safety with your child</p> <p>When your child says he/she is uncomfortable with someone or some situation</p> 	PARENT'S QUICK GUIDE TO TALKING ABOUT SEXUAL HEALTH: The Early Childhood/Elementary Years
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Adapted with permission from Advocates for Youth (<http://www.advocatesforyouth.org>) and from Deborah M. Roffman, author of *Sex & Sensibility: The Thinking Parent's Guide to Talking Sense About Sex*, and *But How'd I Get in There in the First Place: Talking to Your Young Child About Sex* (<http://www.sexandsensibility.net>)