

## ***"20 Tips for Talking With Your Child about Sex"***

Puberty education should come before sex education. Prepare your child for these physical and psychological changes **before** they occur so your child will be more open and less embarrassed. If you begin a dialogue of trust and respect while your child is young, you can build on this relationship as you provide their sex education.

1. Don't wait to be asked.
2. Prepare for the discussion. Find a good book that reflects **your** attitudes and beliefs.
3. Admit if you feel uncomfortable, as your child will probably feel the same as you.
4. Humor can help relax both of you. Share an embarrassing memory or misconception experienced by you or your friends.
5. Explore your child's values and learn what information he/she already possesses.
6. Don't try to cover everything in a single discussion.
7. Focus on more than the physical and psychological aspects of sex. Use this as an opportunity to share your beliefs and values.
8. Keep things casual — avoid lecturing. Your child will learn more if you are open to and seek out his/her questions as you go along.
9. Don't ask, "Do you have questions?" or other closed questions that can be answered by "Yes" or "No." Try open ended questions like, "What do you think about...?"
10. Be sensitive to your child's non-verbal messages. These will give you cues to when he/she may be confused, have questions or not be ready for a discussion. Don't push it. Say, "Let's talk about it at another time" and try it again later.
11. Use this as an opportunity to teach your child correct terminology.
12. When your child uses slang or four letter words, calmly explain the meaning. Let your child know that these terms upset many people and often give an unintended message.

13. Give your child guidelines to protect him/her from sexual abuse. Ex. "If anyone asks to touch your "bathing suit parts," or do something you think is strange, and then keep it a secret, I want you to say, No," and tell me right away.
14. Remember to discuss menstruation with boys as well as girls and let girls understand what an erection is.
15. Do not leave out a discussion about homosexuality as most children see and hear about it on television and are naturally curious.
16. Talk with your child about date rape and emphasize that alcohol clouds judgement and is a major factor in date rape.
17. Be matter of fact in bringing up the topic of AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases. With early elementary grades, it is often necessary to allay excessive fears of becoming infected.
18. It is not wise to avoid a discussion of condoms. Children will hear public discussions and need to obtain accurate information from their parents.
19. Give the message that you are glad to be asked questions. If you do not know the answer, be honest and get the information from your health practitioner, who can be an excellent resource.
20. Get feedback from your child to find out what he/she remembers. Let your child know that you want to continue the discussion when there are more questions.