

SEXUALITY & YOUR CHILD'S DEVELOPMENT



A Guide for Parents of Children Age 0-5 years

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As a parent of a young child, talking about healthy sexuality may not seem like a topic you should be considering so early...

But, children pick up things quickly from their parents and surroundings. This includes words that family members and others use to refer to body parts, gender and other sexual health related terms.

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WHAT DOES SEXUALITY/SEXUAL HEALTH REALLY MEAN?



YOUR ROLE AS A PARENT

- As a parent, you are the first and most important sexual health educator for your child.
- It's okay to feel hesitant to talk about body parts and functions, especially if the topic was not discussed when you were growing up.
- The reality is, as a parent you are continually teaching your child many things about sexuality and have been since the day your child was born.

3

SEXUAL DEVELOPMENT: WHAT TO EXPECT



Birth
to
2 years

- Sexuality for a baby is not like adult sexuality. Getting love and affection is the start of learning to expect and have loving relationships.
- Children learn about the world through touch. Babies learn quickly that touching their genitals feels good.
- Help them name the parts of their body (this is your nose...your knee...your penis...your vulva...your foot, etc.).
- Using the right words for genitals helps avoid confusion and helps prepare parents and children to use these words for important conversations when children are older.



Start using the correct names for body parts now!

Slang

boobs, boobies, knockers, melons, muff, front bum, cookie, fanny, dicky, bird, willy, doodle, weiner, bag, ball sack, nut sack, balls, nuts, family jewels



Correct

Breasts, vulva, penis, scrotum, testicles



3 years
to
5 years

- Your child may ask questions about bodies and where babies come from. A simple explanation like "babies grow in a special place inside the mother called the uterus" is usually enough.
- Your child may be curious about body parts, especially other peoples naked bodies because genitals are usually covered.
- Your child may find adult bathroom activities very interesting. This is a great time to learn about the parts of the body and what they do.
- Many children will touch their genitals for comfort or pleasure. If your child is touching their genitals in public places, you can tell them that it is something to do at home in private.

- Children start to develop gender identity, a child knows "I am a boy" or "I am a girl".
- A very small number of children identify as a gender different from what it says on their birth certificates. Some children identify as both, neither, or somewhere in between. This is normal and healthy.
- The most important thing parents can do is listen to what children say about who they are.

4

FINAL THOUGHTS...



- This information is meant to serve as a guideline only. Each child develops and asks questions at their own pace.
- Answer your child's questions as honestly as you can, with the information you have.
- For more info, visit the Health Information (Hi) website



hi.easternhealth.ca