



awareness to action
Wisconsin
Child Sexual Abuse Prevention

HOW TO TALK TO CHILDREN ABOUT HEALTHY SEXUAL DEVELOPMENT

ALL AGES

Keeping the lines of communication open with your children – regardless of their age – will help you have open and honest discussions about sexuality. Take some time to understand your own values, feelings and beliefs. Remember, children learn by observation, so how you express yourself non-verbally is just as important as what you say to them.

EARLY CHILDHOOD (BIRTH - 3 YEARS)

- Teach children the correct terms for body parts.
- Teach children that you will respect their wishes regarding their body. For example, when they ask you to stop tickling, you stop.
- Begin talking about boundaries and privacy.

LATE CHILDHOOD (4-8 YEARS)

- Encourage children to use correct terminology to describe genitalia.
- Teach children the difference between safe and unsafe touch.
- Do not force physical contact with a child.
- Give child permission to be private about his/her own nudity.
- Teach children that touching oneself is part of healthy sexual development, but should be done in private.
- Begin teaching the mechanics of reproduction and use terms easily understood by child. It is important to take the child's lead in answering questions.

EARLY ADOLESCENCE (9-11 YEARS)

- Be clear about respect for people's boundaries and need for privacy
- Talk about what is and is not appropriate during peer interaction.
- Talk about reproduction.

ADOLESCENCE (12-18 YEARS)

- Teens and preteens often spend a great deal of time wondering if they're "normal." Help them to understand that "normal" for everyone is different.
- Tell your child what you believe in and why. Share your values.



CHILD ABUSE & NEGLECT
Prevention Board

