

## GUIDELINES FOR TEACHING CHILDREN ABOUT SEXUALITY

1. **BEGIN TEACHING WHEN CHILDREN START ASKING QUESTIONS.** (Such as when a woman is pregnant and the child asks, "Why are you getting so fat?")
2. **ALWAYS TELL THE TRUTH!** For example, if a woman has just gained weight, she should tell the child, but if she is pregnant, she should also tell the child.
3. **USE CORRECT TERMINOLOGY!** Parents should use correct terms when referring to body parts. For example: A baby is growing in the mother's uterus. It is a special place that babies grow in. Boys do not have a uterus, but they do have a penis. Do not use slang words when referring to body parts.
4. **IF A CHILD HAS NOT ASKED A FEW QUESTIONS BY THE TIME THEY ARE 6 YEARS OLD, LOOK FOR OPPORTUNITIES TO TALK TO THEM ABOUT THE FACTS OF LIFE.** It is much easier to teach a young child than it is to teach a preteen or teenager who has hormones coursing through his/her body and is already feeling somewhat embarrassed. Many parents think of sexuality as the act of having sex. Thus, they never teach their children because they are uncomfortable with talking about a personal, passionate, private topic to a child. This topic must be taught differently according to the age of the child.
5. **ANSWER ONLY THE QUESTIONS THE CHILD ASKS AND IN TERMS HE/SHE CAN UNDERSTAND.** For example, when a 5-year-old asks where babies come from, all he/she is asking is where babies come from. A good answer would be that the baby grows in a mother's uterus. The baby begins to grow when an egg cell from the mother and a sperm cell from the father join together. The child is not asking about how the sperm got into the mother's body or about how people have sex. When the child asks how the sperm and egg get together, you can explain that it is a very special way that moms and dads have of showing their love for each other. They kiss one another and share their love. The dad's penis goes into the mother's vagina, and the sperm are then put into the mother's body. The sperm and egg join together in the fallopian tube and begin to grow into a baby. The depth of information depends on the age of the child. Remember to have students consider their personal moral beliefs concerning these matters.
6. **ALWAYS LEAVE THE DOOR OPEN FOR MORE DISCUSSION LATER.** Always end the conversation with something like, "Do you have any more questions? If you ever have questions about anything, remember that you can talk to your mom or your dad."

7. **EXPLAIN YOUR MORAL STANDPOINT AS PART OF EVERY DISCUSSION.**  
This is a sensitive topic. You should only talk about it to your family. This is the time to teach a child family values. For example: People should have sex only after they are married (or whatever your values dictate). Ask the older child what he/she thinks would happen if a baby did not have both a mother and a father? If they come to the conclusion that it is better for a baby to have both a mother and a father, then explain that people should wait until after they are married to have sex so that the baby will have both a mother and a father.
8. **REMEMBER THAT CHILDREN ARE NATURALLY CURIOUS ABOUT PHYSICAL DIFFERENCES.**
  - A. Answer questions in a calm, matter-of-fact way.
  - B. Explain about modesty and manners--boys do not dress in front of girls and vice versa.
  - C. Do not put your adult experience and understanding into their questions. **DO NOT JUMP TO CONCLUSIONS!** One youngster asked his mother where he came from. She explained the entire reproductive process to him and thought she had done a great job. When she finished, the little boy said, "Oh, really, Jimmy said he came from Kansas." The little boy asked a very simple question. The mother could have answered him better by asking a question back, "Where do you think you came from?" This gives the child an opportunity to give the adult an idea of the depth of information he/she is seeking.
  - D. If you answer questions for the child of another person, always tell the child's parent about the conversation. Otherwise, the child might inadvertently tell his/her parent what you said, adding some of his/her own interpretation. Protect yourself by telling the parent what was said.
  - E. Always focus on the positive aspects of being either female or male. After explaining the joy of being a mother and the pain of childbirth, one little boy nudged his brother and said, "I'm glad I'm not a girl!" The mother replied, "Well, you don't ever have to feel the pain of having a baby, but you don't ever get to feel a baby inside your body. Girls and boys both have special things about them, and they both have some things that may not be so fun. But, both boys and girls are necessary!"