

Welcome! This newsletter is for families and is offered to you by The Fourth R program. The Fourth R is a healthy relationship curriculum that your child receives at school. The goal of the newsletters is to provide practical and usable information, resources, and strategies related to health education that aligns with what your child is currently learning in class.



## The Fourth R Program – Healthy Relationships, Safe Choices, Connected Youth

The Fourth R promotes healthy relationship skills and reduces risk behaviors

Your child's health class consists of four units of study. This newsletter is related to the third unit of study: **Human Development and Sexual Health**.

What is your child learning in health class?

- How to communicate effectively
- How to use decision-making skills to make healthy choices
- Importance of delaying sexual activity
- Common sexually transmitted infections (STIs)
- How to prevent STIs and unintended pregnancy
- Understanding gender identity
- Understanding issues of consent
- Decisions related to sexual health



Parent involvement matters

Sexual health is an important part of a person's health and wellbeing and influences a person throughout their life. In health class, your child is learning about important topics about what needs to be considered when making decisions related to sexual health, as well as the importance of delaying sexual activity until they are older (which means choosing abstinence). In addition, your child will learn about some of the common sexually transmitted infections as well as HIV and unintended pregnancy. Your child is also learning about the concept of consent, which means saying yes to something that you truly believe you want to say yes to (e.g., going to a party) without any pressure from others (e.g., friends).

Even though some of these topics may seem like they are factors for consideration later in life, it is important to think about decisions, factors, and consequences related to sexual health **before** being in a situation when it may be a concern. For many parents, talking to their child about physical changes and sexuality can be challenging and uncomfortable. For many parents, the topic of sex never came up when they were growing up. But when parents are confident in their knowledge of sexual health, certain about what topics are appropriate to discuss with their child, and know how to start the conversation in their home, there will be many benefits to your child's health and development as a result. Research tells us that young people whose parents discuss all aspects of sexuality with them, tend to delay sexual activity, compared to parents who did not discuss this topic.



**Parent To-Do:** Ask your child to consider what makes a good relationship? How are relationships different? You can begin the conversation by telling your child the qualities you look for in relationships (e.g., honesty, respect, humor)

## What should you talk to your child about when it comes to sexual health?

**Dealing with Pressure:** At some point your child will face pressure from their peers to do something he or she may not feel comfortable with. Talk to your child about how to be assertive in these situations by saying no, or coming up with an excuse or delay tactic to avoid the uncomfortable situations.

**Relationships:** It is not realistic that you will get to know everyone your child spends time with. It is important to teach your child about the qualities a friend or intimate partner should have.

**Decision-making:** Your child negotiates decisions every day in their friendships. Find ways to help them develop the skills they need to make decisions that will keep them safe and healthy as their relationships become more complex.

### Did you know?

Providing an atmosphere where open, honest and two-way communication can take place is a major way parents can assist their children in avoiding problems with drugs, alcohol, sexual decisions and peer relationships.

### Did you know?

Pre-teen children are aware, excited, interested in, and affected by the sexual aspects of their lives. At this age they are likely asking more questions and appear more curious about their sexual health. This may be a very emotional time for children, and they may cry easily as they struggle with the transition from childhood to adolescence.

## How can parents help?

Parents have a chance to ....

**Answer questions honestly** Parents are the preferred source of information when it comes to sexual health. Answer questions honestly and if you don't know how to answer something your child has asked, tell them you want some time to think about the question. Be sure to approach the subject again when you feel prepared.

**Help your child build healthy relationships.** Get to your know your child's friends and watch how your child interacts or uses language with their friends. Find ways to address any language or behaviors that friends may do together that is inappropriate.

**Keep the lines of communication open.** Talk to your child about the physical, emotional, or social changes they may be experiencing. Talk to your child about sexual health and dating. Be sure to include messages with your child about your attitudes and values about sexuality because these richer discussions have been shown to keep youth safer in relationships.

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