

# Talking to your Child about Growing up and Body Changes

Talking to your child about their bodies, relationships, puberty and sex is important; building good channels of communication throughout childhood can help your child to communicate with you as future issues of increasing importance arise and may help to reduce risk taking behaviours as they approach adulthood.

Your child needs to know that it's OK to talk, and that you're happy to talk about it. They'll learn this through your body language, tone and manner when you talk, so try to behave as though you would in any other normal, everyday topic of conversation.

Simple strategies to make talking about bodies, relationships, puberty and sex more comfortable:

- ✓ Start off by talking about something that you both find more comfortable, such as feelings and emotions.
- ✓ Ask them what they think their friends know/think about the topic, as this provides a way to talk about your child's views indirectly.
- ✓ Avoid 'The Chat'. Talk about these issues little and often, over everyday events like washing up or watching TV. This can help to normalise the conversation, and ease uncomfortable feelings.
- ✓ Don't leave it too late. Start talking about puberty before you feel your child is approaching it so that you already have strong channels of communication established in readiness.
- ✓ Be prepared to listen. Your child will want to have their voice heard without feeling judged and feeling listened to will encourage them to come to you to talk about issues in the future.
- ✓ If they ask you a question that you are not sure how to answer, that is OK. Suggest that you find out the answer together and then you will both know!
- ✓ Try to listen calmly, even if what they say surprises or concerns you. Try to remember that it is good that they are comfortable to discuss issues with you, and that they need to trust you will not respond negatively.

**Make sure they know that they can talk to you anytime about anything**