

APPROPRIATE CONVERSATIONS FOR EACH AGE AND STAGE

EARLY SKILLS: WHAT TO ADDRESS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD (0-5 YEARS OLD)

Whether we realize it or not, during the first few years of our child's life we are laying the foundation for their later sexual life. Their first lessons in intimacy, healthy touch, and communication come from their parents and caregivers in these early years. Their sense of wonder and awe as they discover and ask endless questions about the world (including their bodies) can be inspiring and sometimes challenging for us. As much as possible, answer all their questions in a relaxed, matter of fact way so as not to create shame or taboo around any of these topics. Using books to explain body parts and reproduction is particularly helpful at this stage.

- Model respectful communication, love, and support as part of healthy relationships
- Teach anatomy using the correct names for all body parts, including genitals
- Positively acknowledge body exploration, without creating shame
- Be prepared to give a simple discussion of where babies come from
- Model asking for consent (e.g., "may I hug you?")
- Validate your child for asking questions. Create a sense that you are "askable" and approachable on any subject
- Include conversations about safety, including appropriate vs inappropriate touch and the importance of not keeping secrets
- Discuss and deconstruct gender roles. Teach equality
- Talk with other caregivers about your philosophy and strategies

COMMON QUESTIONS ASKED BY 2-5 YEAR OLDS:

1. Where did I come from?
2. How does a baby get in/out of a mommy?
3. What is sex?
4. Where is your penis, mommy?
5. If a boy has long hair, does that make him a girl?
6. Why does Angela have two mommies and I only have one?
7. Why does my penis stand up sometimes?



For answers to these questions
and for recommended books and websites to share with
your children, check out our "Resources For Parents" at
www.bacheinfo.org

WHAT TO TALK ABOUT WHEN?

APPROACHING PUBERTY: WHAT TO DISCUSS WITH YOUR 6-8 YEAR OLD

Children at this stage are like little scientists, coming up with “research” questions about how all sorts of things work. They may be hearing information (and misinformation!) from peers and you want them to come to you for the facts. They are curious about other people’s bodies and may want to “play doctor” or “experiment” with peers. This is developmentally appropriate, AND you can set boundaries around whether or not you want them to participate in this kind of “play.” Overall, you want them to feel that you appreciate their curiosity and that you welcome their questions. Provide books and reliable resources that you can read together or they can check out on their own, then follow up to check for understanding.

- Be prepared to answer more mature questions about reproduction and sex
- Explain puberty/body changes and what to expect
- Discuss privacy and personal boundaries; highlight that their body belongs to them, and that they should ask permission before touching someone else
- Teach nonverbal communication skills, including how to read body language
- Teach respect for all people, genders, family structures, and body types
- Promote healthy body image
- Discuss the difference between media messages and real life
- Ask questions of them (e.g., “what do you think? what do you know about...?”) and then listen a lot!
- Provide resources. Refer to our recommended books and websites at bacheinfo.org



COMMON QUESTIONS ASKED BY 6-8 YEAR OLDS:

1. What is masturbation?
2. When will my breasts start to grow?
3. Will my penis get bigger like my dad's?
4. How does a penis get into a vagina?
5. Why do people have girlfriends or boyfriends?
6. Am I too young to kiss someone I like?
7. How can I tell if someone likes me?

You know your own child's developmental trajectory best! This is only a guide – use your intuition to know what is best for your individual child.

For more information go to www.bacheinfo.org

PUBERTY AND PRETEENS: WHAT TO DISCUSS WITH YOUR 9-12 YEAR OLD

At this age children feel they no longer need a parent for security and safety the way they did as a small child. They are more motivated to take risks, more curious about their own and others' sexuality, and more influenced by peers. However, they do still need you to set limits, to love them unconditionally, to accept them for who they are, to be present, open, and available, and to guide them through these tricky (and fun!) years.



- Be prepared to discuss (and celebrate!) male and female puberty and reproductive anatomy
- Remind them all bodies are different; normalize the diversity of puberty experiences
- Be compassionate. Your child is going through changes which may be challenging physically and emotionally
- Discuss your family's values around dating, masturbation and intimate relationships
- Identify aspects of healthy friendships and relationships, including setting boundaries, respecting each other's opinions and ideas, and consent. Teach red flags for unhealthy relationships
- Discuss and promote respect for diversity in gender identity and sexual orientation
- Discuss the difference between media messages about sexuality and relationships and real life, and between porn and real sexual relationships
- Provide age-appropriate resources and follow up to check for understanding

COMMON QUESTIONS ASKED BY 9-12 YEAR OLDS:

1. Does everyone grow pubic hair?
2. Why do boys get wet dreams?
3. Is it normal to have wetness in my underwear?
4. What does it mean to be gay?
5. If a girl kisses a girl, is she a lesbian?
6. Can a penis be too big/too small? What is a normal penis size?
7. Can tampons get stuck in a girl's vagina? Can a tampon get someone pregnant?
8. How does someone know if they have an STI?
9. Why do people masturbate?
10. What does "popping someone's cherry" (or insert other sexual slang) mean?
11. At what age should people have sex?