

HOW AND WHEN DO I...

Talk to my kids about sex, consent, and safety?

Advice for Parents and Caregivers

- **When it comes to conversations about sex and consent, planning is key.** Familiarize yourself with resources and practice how you'll approach the conversation with a partner or a friend.
- **You may think that your child doesn't want to talk about sex and consent with you, but kids say the opposite.** Lean into the awkwardness and be open to questions. Kids want to feel like they can come to you for answers, especially if they know they won't feel judged.
- **Empowerment is critical, and data shows that teens make healthier decisions when they have more information — so, be a bridge to good information.** Sharing resources shows you respect your child's ability to make choices about their body, health, and relationships. And teens who are educated about sex and consent have better health outcomes and healthier relationships.



Scan to watch our video on this topic.

9 Tips for Talking to Kids About Sex, Consent, and Safety

To learn more, check out these helpful resources:

[Talk to Your Kids About Sex and Healthy Relationships](https://www.health.gov/ourresearch/healthy-relationships)
health.gov

[The Best Sex Education Books for Kids of All Ages \(And Their Parents!\)](https://www.healthychildren.org/healthykids/parents/sex-education)
Healthy Children / AAP

[How to Talk to Kids About Sex and Boundaries](https://www.childmindinstitute.org/parents/parenting-tips/how-to-talk-to-kids-about-sex-and-boundaries)
The Child Mind Institute

The Child Mind Institute is dedicated to transforming the lives of children and families struggling with mental health and learning disorders by giving them the help they need to thrive. We've become the leading independent nonprofit in children's mental health by providing gold-standard care, delivering educational resources to millions of families each year, training educators in underserved communities, and developing tomorrow's breakthrough treatments.

1. **Take time to prepare.** Before talking to your kids about sex and consent, do some research and plan what you want to say.
2. **Practice makes perfect.** If you're feeling nervous about having "the talk," take some time to role play the conversation with a friend or partner.
3. **Keep it scientific.** Use accurate terminology for anatomy rather than euphemisms, even if your child is in preschool. This reinforces that sex and reproduction are natural, scientific processes and nothing to be ashamed of.
4. **Model consent.** Pave the road for conversations about sexual consent by modeling consent in daily life. Maybe your child doesn't want to hug their grandmother or their friend asks them to stop poking them. Teach your child to respect other people's boundaries and let them know that not touching someone when they don't want to be touched is an example of consent.
5. **Be a trusted resource.** Between misinformation from peers and the internet, kids can end up with some very inaccurate ideas about sex. It's important that you act as a bridge to information that your child knows they can trust.
6. **Discuss what's *not* consent.** Flirting, wearing something sexy, or "seeming into it" do not qualify as consenting to sex. And someone who is intoxicated isn't capable of giving consent.
7. **Talk about pressure.** Teach kids that it's not okay to pressure others into doing things and that they shouldn't feel pressured to do things that they don't want to do. When it comes to sex, setting boundaries and respecting them are equally important.
8. **Make a plan.** Even if you are confident that your child makes healthy decisions, take the time to develop safety plans for tricky situations, especially if drugs or alcohol are involved.
9. **Share the why.** Tackle these topics in a simple, clear way. Let your child know that these conversations may be awkward, but are ultimately for their happiness, health, and safety.