

What do children and young people think?

Children and young people want to talk to their parents/carers about sex and relationships, but that can be daunting for a parent/carer. One group of 10-16-year-olds came up with these helpful pieces of advice for parents/carers:

- Take responsibility for talking to us. Don't just wait for us to ask.
- If we ask you things, always tell the truth. Don't put it off or say 'I'll tell you when you're older'.
- Don't be angry and try not to be embarrassed.
- Don't save it all up for a one-off 'birds and bees' lecture. We'd rather you talked naturally, little and often.
- Wait until we're at home and on our own together to avoid embarrassment.
- Make sure we know what you're talking about and let us ask you questions.
- If we ask what a word means, ask us what we think the word means first.
- Don't laugh at us or spread gossip about what we have been talking about.
- If you don't know something, be honest and say that you don't know.
- Give us books or leaflets, but talk to us too.
- Don't expect school to tell us everything – we want to hear from our parents/carers as well.

Useful contacts

Family Lives offers help and advice to parents and carers on any aspect of bringing up children. www.familylives.org.uk

For information and videos clips on talking about SRE to your children, try

www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Talkingaboutsex/Pages/Whytalktoyourchild.aspx

www.familylives.org.uk/how-we-can-help/parentchannel-tv/

For information about your rights and SRE download the leaflet *SRE and Parents* from www.education.gov.uk

For further guidance from the **Sex Education Forum**, download

'Talk to your children about sex and relationships: support for parents' Factsheet 31 www.sexeducationforum.org.uk/media/6360/talk-to-your-children.pdf

For a short film to introduce importance of privacy and not taking or sharing sensitive images search for 'NSPCC Share Aware'.

Talking to Children about Sex and Relationships

Support and information for primary school families

In school we aim to help children to learn to respect themselves and others and move safely from childhood, through adolescence, into adulthood. As part of this work, we deliver an ongoing programme of Sex and Relationships Education (SRE). This programme begins as soon as children arrive in school and continues until the end of secondary school. There is more information on our programme inside this leaflet.

We are very aware that the SRE we deliver in school is only a small part of children's learning about their bodies, emotions, relationships, sexual behaviour, sexuality, sexual health and themselves. The majority of children's learning in this area takes place with you at home.

We hope this leaflet gives you some more information about our partnership in developing children's knowledge, skills and attitudes relating to SRE.

Why should parents and carers talk to their children about sex and relationships?

- Children tell us they want their parents/carers to be the first ones to talk to them about puberty, sex and relationships.
- If families start talking to their children about puberty, sex and relationships, they are less likely to get ideas that worry or confuse them and they learn that it's alright to talk about these things at home and to ask questions.
- Children learn most about values and relationships from family experiences. Close, loving relationships are the best way of showing a young person how your family 'does things' based on your values, culture, faith and beliefs.
- If families talk about sex and relationships openly and honestly, young people are:
 - more prepared for puberty and the changes they will experience
 - more likely to resist pressure to have unwanted sex
 - more likely to delay having sex for the first time
 - more likely to use contraception if they do have sex
 - less likely to have an unplanned pregnancy or to get a sexually transmitted infection.

What do children learn about in SRE in school?

	Questions children will consider	Content Areas
Age 3-5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does my body look like? • How has my body changed as it has grown? • What can my body do? • What differences and similarities are there between our bodies? • How can I look after my body and keep it clean? • How am I learning to take care of myself and what do I still need help with? • Who are the members of my family and trusted people who look after me? • How do I feel about growing up? • How can I be a good friend? • Can I recognise and show my emotions? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Valuing the body • Body parts • My teeth • Shapes and sizes • Self care skills • Change and responsibilities • Identifying and managing emotions
Age 5-7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the names of the main parts of the body? • What can my body do? • When am I in charge of my actions and my body? • Do I understand how amazing my body is? • How can I keep my body clean? • How can I stop common illnesses and diseases spreading? • How do babies change and grow? • How have I changed since I was a baby? • What do babies and children need? • What are my responsibilities now I'm older? • Who is in my family, and how do we care for each other? • Do I know what makes me feel happy, sad, cross etc? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External parts of the body • Valuing the body • Personal hygiene • Babies to children to adults • Growing up • Changing responsibilities
Age 7-9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are males and females different and what are the different parts called? • What can my body do and how is it special? • Why is it important to keep clean? • What can I do for myself to stay clean and how will this change in the future? • How do different illnesses and diseases spread and what can I do to prevent this? • What are the main stages of the human life? • What does it mean to be 'grown up'? • What am I responsible for now and how will this change? • How do parents and carers care for babies? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difference between males and females • Valuing the body's uniqueness and capabilities • Responsibilities for hygiene • Stages of human life • Being grown up • My responsibilities • Parents/carers' responsibilities

Age 9-11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are male and female sexual parts called and what do they do? • What happens to the bodies of boys and girls when they reach puberty? • What influences my view of my body? • How can I keep my growing and changing body clean? • How can the spread of viruses and bacteria be stopped? • What is HIV? • How are babies made? • How can I express my feeling positively as I grow up? • When am I responsible for how others feel? • What should adults think about before they have a baby? • What are families like? • What can I do when I realise I'm in a bad mood? • How do I recognise how other people feel and respond to them? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Names of sexual parts • Puberty • Physical change • Menstruation • Developing body image • Changing hygiene routines • Viruses and bacteria • Human lifecycle • Sexual reproduction • Changing emotions • Responsibility for others • Love, marriage and families
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How can I talk to my child about sex and relationships?

- Read a book, leaflet or watch a video with your child.
- Talk while you're doing something else like washing up or driving.
- Enjoy talking. Laugh with each other, not at each other – it can reduce embarrassment and stress.
- Listen rather than judge. Ask them what they think.
- Answer questions and don't be afraid to say you don't know.
- Have a phrase ready for awkward moments – 'That's a good question. Let's talk about it when we get home.'
- Always respond. Give the message it's good to talk about sex and relationships.
- If it feels too personal, talk about people in books, films or soaps.

What can I say?

Get ideas about what to say from a book like 'Questions Children Ask' by Miriam Stoppard, or 'Let's Talk about Where Babies Come From' by Robie Harris.