

Mum, dad, where do I come from?

**You are the best person
to teach your child
about sexuality**



Sooner rather than later, your child will ask you one of those dreaded questions, “How are babies made?” Do not panic. Be glad that your child has come to you for information, rather than ask his friends or go online to find answers. In answering your child’s questions, you can help him address any inaccurate messages or perceptions that he may have heard from others.

When to start?

From an early age, children start to get curious about sexuality. For example, where does he come from? Studies have shown that children who talk to their parents about sexuality issues are less likely to engage in risky sexual activities than those who do not do so. So don’t be afraid. Sexuality education is an ongoing process.



How to start?

1. Be prepared

What are your own attitudes towards sexuality issues? What values do you want to impart to your child? Ask family and friends about how they spoke to their children about sexuality. Read up. It is easier to talk about something that you are confident about. If you feel uncomfortable talking to your child about the issue of sexuality, admit it. However, do let your child know why you are not comfortable talking about it. Let him know that you will overcome this discomfort by addressing this issue together with him.

2. Say it simply

Answer your child's question. Get the facts right, be open and honest. There is no need to venture into the history and intricate mechanisms of sexuality at this point. If your child wants to know more, he will ask.

For example, teach your child from toddlerhood to use proper terms such as "penis" and "vagina" when naming parts of the body. Picture books about the body can help you along. And when your child is in preschool, talk to them about where babies come from.

3. Keep it going

Try to engage your child during "teachable moments". For instance, when you come across a pregnant lady while walking at the shopping mall, use this opportunity to start a discussion. It is likely that your child will come back to you with more questions after that. Stay open and available, and remain honest. This will help you to send a message to your child that sexuality is not a taboo topic, which he can discuss with you just like any other issue.

How to prepare?

- Discuss with your spouse what both of you want him to know about sexuality.
- Be prepared with answers. If your child's question stumps you, tell him that you need to read up and will get back to him — do not forget to do so.
- Keep your answers simple.
- Anticipate "teachable moments" and use them to communicate your family's values and beliefs.

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The right touch

Teach your child what is a “good touch” and “bad touch”. It is fine to hug and kiss people whom your child knows and loves (and for your child to be hugged and kissed in return by them).

It is important, however, for your child to know what to do if:

- **He feels uncomfortable about the way that he is being touched.**

For example, when someone touches his genitals or forces a hug on him.

- **He is warned never to tell anyone about the encounter.**

Tell your child that he does not have to blindly follow whatever an adult says, even if the person is a family member. Tell your child: “It is wrong for a grown-up to ask you to lie or steal. It is wrong for a grown-up to ask you to touch his genitals.”

- **He is forced to touch another person.**

A “bad touch” may refer to touching any area that the child may not be comfortable with, not just the genitalia. For example, caressing a child’s back or playfully slapping his bottom.

If something happens and makes your child feel uncomfortable, teach him to do the following:

- Say “no!” and get away as quickly as possible. Do not be alone with that person again.
- Call or scream for help.
- Inform an adult whom he trusts, like his parents or a teacher.



Need more help?

For more information on sexuality education, you can go to HPB Online at www.hpb.gov.sg and search for “your role in sex education”.

The Health Promotion Board has a programme called “Love Them. Talk about Sex” that helps parents talk to their children about sexuality and its related issues. The programme is conducted at workplaces, schools and other community settings.

What you will learn:

- Sexuality questions children are asking today.
- How do you prepare to talk about sexuality with your child?
- Building blocks of good communication.
- How to initiate the conversation and how to react to questions.

If you are interested to attend “Love Them. Talk About Sex”, request your company’s Human Resource Department to email hpb_shp@hpb.gov.sg to request for the programme to be conducted at your workplace.

A young woman with dark hair, wearing a white sleeveless top and blue jeans, is sitting on a light-colored couch. She is looking towards an adult woman with dark hair, wearing a yellow top and blue jeans, who is also sitting on the couch. They are both smiling warmly at each other. The adult woman's hands are resting on the young woman's hands, which are clasped together. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

“ Anticipate “teachable moments” and use them to communicate your family’s values and beliefs.”