

5 Tips on Talking About Sexual Health with Your Teen

Talking about sexual health topics - like healthy and unhealthy relationships, birth control and STIs - can be daunting and uncomfortable for many parents. The good news is there are ways to prepare and moments to take advantage of, which will help you talk with your teen about these topics.

1. **It's never too late to begin talking.** Even if your children are in their teens and you haven't talked much about sexuality – find a place to begin. Settings that don't require direct eye contact – car rides, walks, washing the dishes – can lead to open, meaningful conversations.
2. **Having more conversation.** Create opportunities where your teen can ask a question or make a comment. If you can't answer immediately, plan to come back to the conversation more than once to build and reinforce information and answer additional questions.
3. **Use teachable moments.** These moments can happen when you least expect them. You may hear lyrics to a song, watch a TV show together, or your teen may tell you a story about someone in school. Ask their opinion, and use it as an opportunity to talk about sexual health and healthy choices.
4. **Be prepared for what your teen may tell you.** You may learn something about your teen that may be difficult to hear. Whatever they tell you, remember that they are trusting you with this information. Try to make the most out of the situation by remaining calm and being understanding. If you react badly, they may not open up to you again.
5. **Don't make threats.** Making threats won't get you anywhere, even if you're trying to be funny. The only thing it will accomplish is making your teen afraid to approach you if they do end up needing your help.



Reminder: Routine immunization consent forms were sent home last month with Grade 5 and 9 students.

Also, as the best defense against influenza infection & illness, an annual influenza immunization is recommended for all Albertans six months of age and older. For more information about influenza immunization visit <http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/influenza.asp>

For more tips on talking to your teen about sexual health, please visit the Alberta Health Services www.teachingsexualhealth.ca

Developmental Assets

Given the enormous responsibility that parents and caregivers have as major influences in a child's life it's normal to sometimes feel uncertain when it comes to raising your teens. The Search Institute has identified a list of 40 research-based, positive experiences and qualities that influence young people's development, helping them become caring, responsible, and productive adults. Below are examples of some developmental assets for you as a parent to consider and discuss with your teen.

- Supporting and loving your child – Do you and your teen communicate positively? Does your teen receive support from other non-parent adults?
- Empowering your child – Is your teen given useful roles in the community?
- Setting clear and realistic boundaries – Does your family have clear rules and consequences?
- Helping your teen use her or his time in meaningful, constructive ways – Does your teen spend 3 or more hours per week in extra-curricular activities?
- Encouraging your teen to develop a lifetime commitment to learning – Does your teen want to do well in school?
- Instilling positive values in your teen – Does your teen place high value on helping other people? Does your teen tell the truth even when it's not easy?
- Developing social competencies in your teen – Does your teen know how to plan ahead and make choices? Can they resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations?
- Encouraging your teen to form a positive identity – Does your teen feel good about themselves?

For the full list of developmental assets and to learn more visit www.search-institute.org.