

# TALKING TO OUR CHILDREN ABOUT SEXUALITY



**Sexuality includes body parts, relationships, communication, values, decision-making, and sexual activity.**

Talking about sexuality helps young people feel good about themselves and their bodies. It can help them make decisions about:

- When to have sex
- Talking to their partner about safer sex
- Using condoms
- STI testing
- Planning pregnancy
- Telling someone if they have been abused

“I think it’s easier and less stressful to have ‘the talk’ little bits at a time as they grow rather than one big talk when they are a teenager.

– Parent of young children, Iqaluit

“It was important for me that he finished school before becoming a father. He also needs to know to respect his partner; if his partner says ‘NO’ then he can only do what they are comfortable with.

– Parent of a teenager, Kugluktuk

**Demonstrate Pilimmaksarniq. Be open, honest and welcoming. Keep your sense of humour. Do not worry if the conversation isn’t perfect.**

## CONVERSATION STARTERS



Use TV shows, movies, music and the news to start a conversation. Talk about values and expectations while you cook, eat, hunt or sew together.

“That’s a great question. I’m glad you asked me about that.”

“I don’t know. But I’ll find out and tell you what I learn.”

“It seems like you don’t want to talk about this right now, and that’s ok. If you ever have any questions, you can ask me.”

“Do you have any questions about what you’re feeling or the changes you’re going through?”

“What do you think that means?”

“I feel a little uncomfortable, but this is important. Let’s find some answers together.”



Respect yourself, respect your body, respect your partner!

[www.irespectmyself.ca](http://www.irespectmyself.ca)



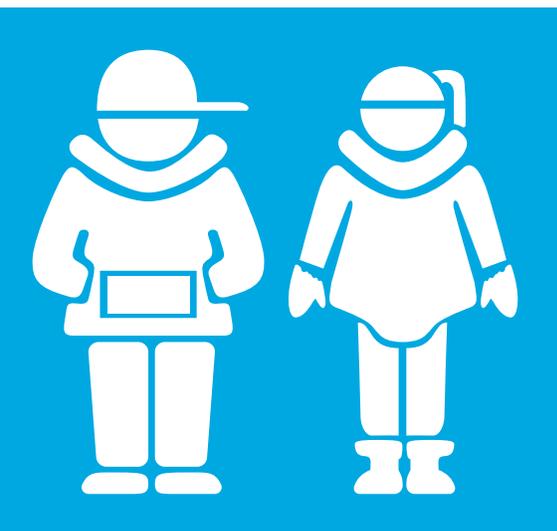
### TIPS FOR YOUNG CHILDREN (AGES 0-7)

- Use the correct words for body parts: penis, vagina, bum. This helps children feel good about all of their body parts and helps them communicate clearly if something is wrong.
- Young children are curious about their bodies. Sometimes they touch their penis or vagina in public. Treat this as normal. Remind them that people usually do that in private.
- Penis, vagina, bum, breasts and mouth are private parts. Discuss who can touch their private parts and when (using the toilet, dressing, visiting the nurse or doctor). Tell them that no one should ask a child to touch their private parts.
- Talk about and give examples of safe touch and unsafe touch. Children can say “NO” to any touch that makes them feel uncomfortable or disrespected. They can tell a trusted adult. Make sure they know you want to help.
- Answer questions honestly and simply. Give them more information if they ask more questions. It’s ok if you don’t know the answer – you can find out and tell them later!



### TIPS FOR OLDER CHILDREN (AGES 7-12)

- Help children prepare for puberty by talking about the changes that will happen to their bodies. Periods (menstruation) and wet dreams (nocturnal emissions) are natural and healthy.
- Explain that babies are made when a man’s sperm joins a woman’s ovum (egg) during sexual intercourse. A baby grows in a uterus and is born through a vagina. People who have periods can make babies if they have sexual intercourse.
- Talk about Inuit values such as Inuuqatigiitsiarniq and Qanuqtuurniq. Discuss how children can show respect for their friends, families and partners. Use TV shows, movies and real life situations to encourage them to think about what they would do in that specific situation.
- Demonstrate values such as Tunnganarniq by letting children know you love and accept them – no matter what they look like, what decisions they make, or who they love and are attracted to.



### TIPS FOR TEENAGERS

- Encourage teenagers to share what is going on in their lives. Make sure they know it’s okay to ask questions. Let them know that you support them and don’t judge them.
- Talk about the decisions they may make. Encourage them to be safe, and be specific! “We want you to have a baby when you are ready. Do you know where to get birth control and how to use it?” “There might be alcohol at this party. How do you plan to stay safe if you drink?”
- Discuss the difference between healthy and unhealthy relationships. Healthy relationships are safe, honest, respectful and fun. Unhealthy relationships are violent, jealous, clingy or make you feel guilty.

#### For more information about talking with children and youth:

Talk to a nurse, community health representative, other parents, Elder or another person you trust.

#### Visit these websites:

[www.irespectmyself.ca](http://www.irespectmyself.ca)

[parents.teachingsexualhealth.ca/resources/print-resources](http://parents.teachingsexualhealth.ca/resources/print-resources)

[inuithealthmatters.aboutkidshealth.ca/](http://inuithealthmatters.aboutkidshealth.ca/)

