### Tips for parents talking to their kids about sex

1. **Talk soon. Talk often.**
   Listen too.

2. **Offer lots of little conversations over time from toddlerhood to teenhood, not one ‘big talk’**.

3. **Start talking about bodies when your child is an infant, and use the correct names for body parts: penis, testes, scrotum, vulva, vagina, breasts**.

4. **Sexual health is not just about having sex, it’s bodies, babies, growing up, being a girl, being a boy, love, sexual expression, feelings, personal values, decisions and relationships**.

5. **Do not just wait for your children to ask questions**.

6. **Take advantage of teachable moments. Use prompts from TV, magazines, experiences with friends, music and the Internet to start conversations and ‘hypotheticals’**.

7. **Answer questions honestly and simply. Just a little bit of information is OK because you can always come back to it (and you should)**.

8. **Good communication needs two-way talk, not one-way lectures**.

9. **Be a ‘tellable’ parent — make yourself available, unshockable and listen**.

10. **It’s never too late to start. If you are feeling self-conscious, avoid eye-contact and start a conversation when you’re in the car or doing the dishes**.

11. **Don’t assume every child is heterosexual: about 10% of the population will be same-sex attracted**.

12. **If you don’t know how to respond to a question it is OK to say so. Say something like, ‘That’s a good question. I don’t know how to answer it. I’ll find out and get back to you,’ or ‘We can find out together’**.

13. **Continue to show your child affection even when they are going through puberty. Regular hugs can communicate a lot**.

14. **Find out when and what your child is learning at school about sexual health so you can be prepared**.

15. **Let your kids know about using condoms even if you disapprove of them having sex**.

16. **Leave age-appropriate brochures and books with accurate information on sexuality around for your children to read**.

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**FACT:** Puberty can start at 8 (mostly at 10 or 11), and can continue until 18 (but can be later).

**FACT:** By the end of high school, about 50% of young people have had sex. And 50% have not had sex.

**FACT:** Research shows: children who talk about sexuality with their parents start having sex later.

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This tip sheet is adapted from Talk soon. Talk often., a publication for parents produced by the Western Australian Department of Health, based on research and development by the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health & Society at La Trobe University, Victoria.