



Girls' and boys' bodies

Ages 5-6

WHAT IS YOUR CHILD GOING THROUGH?

Between the ages of 3 and 5, children become more curious about their bodies and other people's bodies. This is a time when they wonder about the "why" and "how" of many things, including sex and sexuality.

They recognize the different parts of the body and know that each part has a name and specific function. They are interested in the differences between the bodies of boys and girls and the bodies of men and women. They also like to say body-related words, such as penis, bum, hair, pee, pooh, etc.

At the age of 5, they can understand the difference between boys and girls (penis, vagina) and what differentiates adults from children (difference in size, weight, etc.).

Things that kids might be wondering

- What does a penis do?
- Why do women have breasts?
- Will my penis grow?
- What is a vagina?

WHAT CAN YOU DO AS A PARENT?

Teach your child about the concept of private parts



Take advantage of your child's curiosity by talking about the concept of private parts. For example, if your child touches the genitals of his parents or a brother or sister, you can say:

"The breasts, penis, vagina and bum are private parts. We don't touch other people's private parts. The same goes for your private parts. If someone touches them, you can talk to me or talk to another adult."

For most children, this touching doesn't represent sexual activity but rather a desire to compare themselves to others and understand the differences between themselves and other people. Use this opportunity to sit down together and read a book that shows images of boys' and girls' bodies.



Help children become aware of the feelings in their bodies

Ask them to name:

- Two things that make their bodies feel **good** (getting a hug or kiss, taking a hot bath, playing with their hair, eating something they like) and the emotions that these actions give them (joy, happiness, pleasure).
- Two things that make their bodies feel **bad** (falling down, hitting their heads, arguing with friends, having nightmares) and the emotions that these actions give them (pain, sadness, fear).

Explain to children that they can talk to you when they experience a situation and don't know whether it feels good or not.

WHAT CAN HELP YOU?

Books for parents

LESSARD, Sophia. *Pour l'amour des enfants... La découverte de la sexualité et ses mystères*, Éditions Sexprime, 2001.

SAINT-PIERRE, Frédérique, and Marie-France VIAU. *My Child's Sexuality: Questions and Answers for Parents*, Éditions du CHU de Sainte-Justine, 2009.

Books to read with your child

CURTO, Rosa-Maria, and Nuria ROCA. *Ton corps, de la tête aux pieds*, Ulisse Éditions, 2002.

TIBO, Gilles. *Le corps du Petit Bonhomme*, Québec Amérique Jeunesse, 2005.

Do you need a professional resource?

Call Info-Santé at 811 or the parent help line at 1-800-361-5085.

Tips

Use the right words when referring to the genitals. Boys have a penis and testicles and girls have a vagina. Calling genitals by their actual names will help children understand that these are parts of the body just like any other. This will also help them use the right terms to talk about any discomfort in this area (i.e., genital pain, irritation, etc.).

Educate children about diverse body shapes. When answering questions about the differences between boys and girls, tell children that there are different types of bodies (height, size, colour, shape) and that they all have the same value.

Tell children that their bodies are a precious thing. Teach them early on about the importance of taking care of their bodies. This means washing themselves, brushing their teeth, going to bed early, washing their hands, eating healthy foods, cutting their nails, etc.

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