



Conception, fertility and puberty

Ages 10-11

WHAT IS YOUR CHILD GOING THROUGH?

Pre-puberty is a time of great change for your child.

During this period, children may:

- Have started puberty (growth spurts, development of breasts in girls, appearance of hair, etc.).
- Be anxious about these changes and the changes that will happen to their bodies.
- Want to know more about conception, pregnancy and birth.
- Place greater importance on what their friends think about them.
- Start becoming independent from their parents.
- Have a new interest and curiosity about sex.

Things kids may be wondering:

- What is sex?
- Do people make a baby every time they have sex?
- What is puberty?
- What are periods?
- What is an erection?
What's ejaculation?

WHAT CAN YOU DO AS A PARENT?

Answer their questions

What does it mean to have sex or make love?

- Having sex or making love is when two adults are very attracted to each other and want to express the love they feel towards one another. They share pleasant feelings (affection, tenderness, pleasure) and touching (hugs, kisses).
- Two adults can have sex (make love) to have a child, but generally they make love because they want to get closer to each other.

Puberty is the stage when people move from childhood to adolescence. This is also the time when sex organs start getting ready for their reproductive function.



Do people make a baby every time they have sex?

A baby can only be conceived if sperm make their way into the woman's vagina.

If the sperm meet up with the woman's egg, one of the sperm can then fertilize the egg. The egg and sperm must therefore be at the same place at the same time.

To prevent the egg from being fertilized, a method of contraception needs to be used to prevent the sperm from reaching the woman's egg (condom) or to prevent the woman from releasing an egg (the pill).

Prepare your daughter for her first period

Let your daughter know that when she starts puberty, her body will ovulate each month. If the egg isn't fertilized, she will menstruate (bleed from the vagina for a few days). Go over what periods are; how often they occur and how long they last; possible pain from cramps; feminine hygiene products that she can use; and what to do if she gets her period at school. By preparing her for her period, your daughter will understand that this is something natural that she shouldn't be embarrassed or ashamed of.

Reassure your son about erections and his first ejaculations

At puberty, your son may start having erections (the penis will harden) for no reason, and he might not be able to control them. In some cases, this can be embarrassing (when it happens in class or the school locker room). He may also start having his first wet dreams. When he wakes up, he may notice that semen (white liquid that contains sperm) has leaked from his penis. Reassure him by telling him that this is normal and will eventually stop.

Tips

Tell children that they become fertile during puberty, which means they become physically capable of having children. In boys, fertility begins when they start producing sperm. In girls, fertility begins when they start producing eggs (menstruation). Even though young people are physically capable of reproducing at puberty, this doesn't mean this is a good time for them to have children. They may be physically ready, but they also need to be intellectually and emotionally ready too. This rarely happens before adulthood.

Choose the right time to talk to them about puberty. This could be embarrassing for both you and them. Choose a time when your child will be receptive and that will make the discussion easier (in the car, in the evening before bed, after an activity). They need to know you are there to answer their questions.

WHAT CAN HELP YOU?

Book for parents

ROBERT, Jocelyne. *Parlez-leur d'amour et de sexualité*, Les Éditions de l'Homme, 1999.

Book for children

ROBERT, Jocelyne. *Ma sexualité de 9 à 11 ans*, Les Éditions de l'Homme, 2003.

Do you need a professional resource?

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



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