

Talking About Sex with Kids: How to Get Started - From Body Safety to Puberty

Based on insights from pediatric and behavioral health experts

Use Simple, Clear, Accurate Language

- Use real anatomical terms (penis, vagina, uterus)
- Avoid euphemisms - they can send the message that bodies are “shameful”
- Keep explanations factual and age-appropriate

Teach Body Safety Early & Often

- Private parts are private
- No one should:
 - Touch them
 - Ask to see them
 - Ask them to touch someone else
- If something feels wrong:
 - Tell a trusted adult
 - They will not get in trouble

Normalize Curiosity & Development

- Exploring their body is normal at many ages
- Use this as a chance to talk about:
 - Privacy
 - Body ownership
 - Boundaries
- Simple message:
 - “Your body is yours. Some things are private. You can always come to me if something feels confusing or unsafe.”

Talking About Puberty

- Keep it private and respectful
- Use neutral observations:
 - “Have you noticed changes like body odor or voice changes?”
- Talking about others’ changes can feel less personal and ease the conversation
- Reading a puberty book together can help

Follow Their Lead

- Answer what they ask - no more, no less
- Kids will often ask, get what they need, then move on
- If they want more detail, they’ll ask

To learn more, access podcasts with Emerson Health pediatric experts:
Emersonhealth.org/conversations

