



SEX IS...

THE BACKPOCKET SEX DISCUSSION GUIDE

TRUSTED ADULT EDITION

Conversations about sex can be difficult. They can be awkward and uncomfortable, especially when they involve the young people in your life. That's why we've created a discussion guide to help you, as a Trusted Adult, approach conversations about sex in an open, honest, and sex-positive manner.

LET'S TALK ABOUT SEX

At **Sex Is...DC**, we don't believe in "the talk." Instead, we believe there is a lifelong conversation about sex. It can start as early as age 1, when we discuss the right names for body parts, to adulthood when we share lessons and experiences!

SEX POSITIVITY

Sex positivity is an attitude that celebrates sexuality as an enhancing part of life that brings happiness, energy, and celebration. Sex-positive approaches strive to achieve ideal experiences, rather than solely working to prevent negative experiences. In other words, a sex-positive approach is one that recognizes that there can be physical and emotional risks with sex, but also recognizes that sex can be bring pleasure and is a natural part of life.

ANSWERING THE TOUGH QUESTIONS

In the guide you'll find some common questions young people may ask about sex. The answers are broken down by a child's grade level and provide guidance for both short conversations (the most basic response) and extended conversations (a detailed response for when you and your young person have a deeper conversation). This is meant as a prompt and should be adjusted based on a child's knowledge and comfort level.

If you are a parent of someone under 10 looking for tips on how to talk to very young children, we recommend the following links, which can also be found on our website.

- www.kidshealth.org/en/parents/questions-sex.html
- www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/sexual-health/in-depth/sex-education/art-20044104
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=EinNeciMgpQ

A **TRUSTED ADULT** is someone who...



- 1** Uses their **MIND**. They know that the conversation might be awkward, but it's important. They seek accurate information to prepare for conversations.
- 2** Listens with their **EARS**. They listen actively and use subtle cues to let a young person know they're being heard and respected.
- 3** Minds their **MOUTH**. They are honest, sex positive, and speak without judgment.
- 4** Leads with their **HEART**. They care about a young person's well-being.
- 5** Thinks about their **BODY LANGUAGE**. They show an openness to conversation and relating to a young person on their level.



ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

There's a lot of fact finding at this age. So be prepared with answers and don't feel like you have to answer any more than what they asked about at that specific time. But, be ready as more questions will come your way.

What is sex?

Short Answer: Sex is a special kind of cuddle between older people.

Extended Answer: Sex is something older people do (use your discretion to decide what “older” means) that makes them feel good, or to sometimes try and have a baby. It can be done different ways, including a penis going into a vagina, a penis going into an anus (butt) or a mouth kissing a penis or a vagina. It is not something kids should do with adults or with other kids.

Is it OK for someone to touch me?

Short Answer: What kind of touch do you mean?
No one should touch your private parts.
Did that happen to you?

Extended Answer: *(If they are just asking a question and you have assessed that there is no concern to be reported)* Kids should not let anyone touch their privates — adults and other kids included.

When you get older that may change, but right now, only you and your doctor, with your parent in the room for an exam, should touch your privates.

Is it normal for my penis to get hard?

Short Answer: Yes, sometimes blood flows to your penis and it gets hard.

Extended Answer: Yes, sometimes blood flows to your penis and it gets hard, especially during puberty. It can be embarrassing but is completely normal. If it happens, try to think of something boring or neutral and relax until it stops.

How was I/a baby made?

Short Answer: A woman has eggs inside of her and a man has something called “sperm.” When these get together, they make a baby.

Extended Answer: Not all babies come from sex between a man and a woman. Pregnancies start when an egg and sperm meet; this can happen inside a uterus in a few ways, including having sex, putting sperm in a vagina at a doctor’s office, and putting the egg and sperm together in a lab at a doctor’s office.

How can you tell if someone is a boy or a girl?

Short Answer: You can’t — they have to tell you who they are.

Extended Answer: Whether someone identifies as a man or woman is called their gender identity (GI) and they define that for themselves. Some people have a GI that matches the body that typically is labeled male or female but other people do not and they may identify as the opposite gender (i.e., born a male but identify as a female now) or they may identify as something else (non-binary, gender queer, etc). So let people tell you who they are — don’t assume!



MIDDLE SCHOOL

Middle and high school is typically when the questions start to fall into three categories:

- 1 Am I normal?**
During middle and high school, comparison to their peers is top of mind and everyone is striving for “normal.” Assuring them that they are normal and that there is a range of experiences when it comes to sex is important.
- 2 Knowledge-based**
They want the facts from a trusted source. They have access to so much information, but need to know what is truthful and reliable.
- 3 Values or “What do you think?”**
They trust you and want to know what you think. These are the trickiest questions to answer. This is a good time to ask them why they want to know or what they think. Hold judgment and remember they are trying to figure things out.

Do I have to have sex to get pregnant?

Short Answer: Typically yes, a woman has to have sex with a man to get pregnant.

Extended Answer: Not all babies come from sex between a man and a woman. Pregnancies start when an egg and sperm meet; this can happen inside a uterus in a few ways, including having sex, putting sperm in a vagina at a doctor's office, and putting the egg and sperm together in a lab at a doctor's office.

Is it normal to have feelings for both guys and girls?

Short Answer: Yes, all feelings are valid.

Extended Answer: Attraction, or feelings, are on a continuum, like from 0-10, and people can be at 0, or only attracted to the opposite sex or at 10, only attracted to the same sex. A lot of people are somewhere in the middle.

Feelings can be everything from sexual attraction to emotional attraction.

How do gay people have sex?

Short Answer: The same way as everyone else; they kiss, cuddle, and get intimate.

Extended Answer: There is vaginal, oral, and anal sex and anyone can have any type of sex. A penis can go into a vagina or an anus (the butt), and oral sex is when someone puts their mouth on someone's genitals (penis, vagina, or anus).

Any one of these acts can bring a person sexual pleasure.

What is a blow job?

Short Answer: It's a sexual act.

Extended Answer: It is when someone puts their penis in someone's mouth and can also be called "oral sex." It brings pleasure to the person receiving the "blow job."

Is it ok to watch porn?

Short Answer: Porn is meant for people over the age of 18. It is not a realistic view of sex.

Extended Answer: What do you think about porn? Some people enjoy porn for entertainment or to get turned on. The thing to know is that porn is not real. People do not wear condoms in porn and women are often not treated well in porn. So if a person chooses to watch porn they should watch with a critical eye.



HIGH SCHOOL

Questions high school aged youth ask are similar to those middle school students tend to ask. During high school, many young people start romantic and sexual relationships, so helping youth think through their own values and expectations is important.

Is it ok to stop having sex with someone after you started?

Short Answer: Always. That means you can stop before it happens, during the act, or after you've had sex once or 100 times. You can say "no" whenever you want, and your decision should be respected by your partner.

If someone does not take no for an answer get away and get help. Tell someone!

Extended Answer: Always. That means you can stop before it happens, during the act, or after you've had sex once or 100 times. You can say "no" whenever you want, and your decision should be respected by your partner.

If someone does not take no for an answer, get away and get help. Tell someone!

How do I get birth control?

Short Answer: In DC anyone can get birth control without parental permission by visiting a doctor or clinic that provides reproductive health. Go to sexisd.org to find a provider.

Extended Answer: In DC anyone can get birth control without parental permission by visiting a doctor or clinic that provides reproductive health care services. You should consider always using a condom when having sex as it's the only method that protects against STDs. Go to sexisd.org and review the types of contraception and find a provider that you can talk to and get the right method for you. Do you have any other questions?

Can I get pregnant or an STD from anal sex?

Short Answer: A woman cannot get pregnant from anal sex but can get an STD from anal sex.

Extended Answer: There are three kinds of sex and STDs can be transmitted through any of them. To protect you and your partner, use a barrier method, like a condom. A condom and lube should always be used for anal and vaginal sex and a condom or dental dam should be used for oral sex.

Did you have sex when you were my age?

Short Answer: Are you wondering if it's ok to have sex at your age? What do you think?

Extended Answer: (You may want to share your story or a story that might help the young person think through their choices and values.)

Does sex hurt?

Short Answer: Sex should not hurt.

Extended Answer: Sex is meant to be pleasurable. Sometimes people do find that it hurts and it could be something as simple as needing more lube or it could be a medical issue. It's important to talk to your partner if sex hurts and talk to your doctor as well.



18+

This is a lifetime conversation and we all have things we can learn and questions we want to ask. So, don't shut the conversation down after high school. Keep it open, answer honestly, and help the person explore their own values, feelings, and expectations. Share resources as many older youth want to do their own research.

How many partners is too many?

Short Answer: That's really a personal decision. Limiting partners decreases your risk of STDs.

Extended Answer: That's a personal question that only you can answer for yourself. Ask yourself: What are your values and expectations around sex? Do you want to only have sex with whomever you marry or your long-term partner? Why are you having sex with each partner? Are you taking precautions for reducing risks? Are you feeling pleasure and fulfillment?

How do I talk to my partner about sex?

Short Answer: You have to be honest with them. Find moments in songs, movies, or after a doctor's appointment to bring it up if you are having trouble.

Extended Answer: If it's about safety and protections, think about getting tested together — a counselor will start some of that dialogue for you. Or use an online questionnaire — even a funny one to talk about risk, history, or even positions and pleasure.

Be honest! It's hard to talk about sex sometimes — even with the person you'd like to have it with or are having it with!

Is it normal to not have had sex yet?

Short Answer: Yes, there is no time limit. (You may want to ask the young person, "What do you think or why do you ask?")

Extended Answer: When someone has sex, it is personal and many factors go into the decision — preference, comfort, values, and physical and emotional readiness. Don't judge someone else's choices. You don't want them to judge yours.

Is it ok to stop using condoms if I trust my partner?

Short Answer: Condoms are the only method that can protect you and your partner from STDs, HIV, and pregnancy.

Extended Answer: At some point, lots of couples get tired of condoms. Here are some things you need to consider: **1)** Do you have a method that protects you against pregnancy? (if that is a concern for the couple); **2)** Have you been tested for STDs and HIV together? Or have you been tested separately and are willing to share your results with each other? **3)** Have you had an honest conversation about monogamy/only having sex with each other? **4)** Have you considered different condoms and/or lube to switch it up a bit? **5)** What if things change in the relationship? **6)** Have you talked with your doctor or a sexual health counselor about options beyond condoms to prevent HIV and pregnancy(i.e. PrEP, birth control)?

When should I see a gynecologist?

Short Answer: A woman's first visit should occur by the age of 18, and earlier if she is sexually active. A "well-woman" visit is important, and after your initial appointment, you and your doctor will decide what is right for you in terms of "well-woman" visit scheduling. Have a list of questions so you remember what you want to ask.

Extended Answer: Is there something specific you want to ask them? Don't wait for an appointment — call and ask to speak to them or a nurse. If they are not available, go to sexisd.org to find a provider who can talk or meet with you sooner!



TALK TIPS

- 1 Listen as much as you talk.** It is very important to let them talk about what they're feeling in a non-judgmental manner and to be an active listener. Give them the space to be vulnerable.
- 2 Check in regularly with the young person in your life about what's going on with them and their peers at school.** Ask them how they feel about their friendships and help guide them through any troubles they're having. Share your own experience with friendships and dating at that age — remind them you were once young yourself! Also, remember that you were once young yourself and put yourself in their shoes.
- 3 Do not jump to conclusions about why they're asking questions about sex.** It may or may not mean they are having sex. Take a deep breath and keep an open mind. You can say, "Can you tell me what you already know about that?" or "What have you heard about that?"
- 4 Keep your answers short and simple.** Be sure to explain words they might not have heard before. Or, if they use a term or slang you haven't heard before, ask them what it means.
- 5 Keep the conversation open.** You can say something like, "What other questions about stuff like this do you have?" or "What's going on in your life/at school that made you think about this?" Ask questions that encourage the young person to share experiences. Also, respect their boundaries if they feel uncomfortable talking about certain topics.
- 6 Never share what was discussed and keep your word.** Gaining and keeping trust is key to successful sex positive conversations.

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WE ARE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
GOVERNMENT OF THE
DC MURIEL BOWSER, MAYOR