

*Give age-appropriate information.*

Too much information at one time will probably be forgotten. None of us learn everything the first time we hear it.

*Always leave the door open for later discussion.*

A one-time talk will not meet the ongoing



needs of a growing child. Tell your child, "There is lots to understand. Let's talk some more when you have other questions!"

**Things to avoid:**

- Telling your child, "You're not old enough to know that." Instead, respond using words she understands.
- Talking about sex when your child strongly refuses to. This will make it very hard for your child to talk openly with you.
- Teasing your children (or allowing others to tease them) about their changing bodies.
- Using too much humor when discussing sex. Your children might think sex is not a serious subject.

# Putting Knowledge to Work



When you have a question, call or visit your local office of The University of Georgia's Cooperative Extension Service.

You'll find a friendly, well-trained staff ready to help you with information, advice, and free publications covering agriculture and natural resources, family and consumer sciences, 4-H and youth development.

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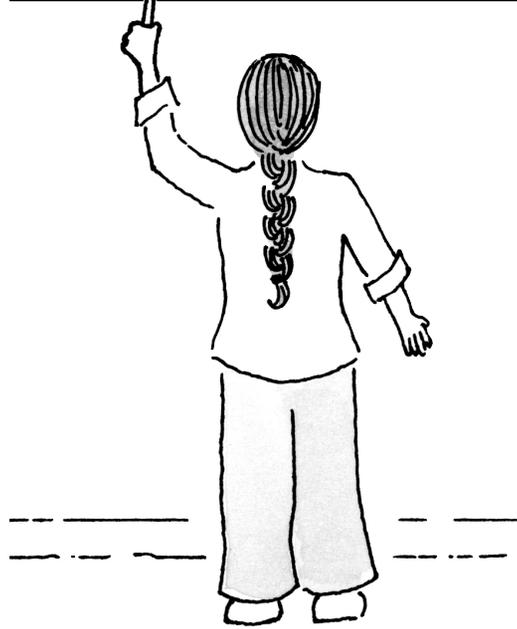
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GALE A. BUCHANAN, DEAN & DIRECTOR

# TIPS FOR PARENTS

## Your child's Sexuality: Questions and Answers



The University of Georgia

Cooperative Extension Service

College of Family and Consumer Sciences  
and College of Agricultural and  
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## Your child's Sexuality: Questions and Answers

“Daddy, why does Jimmy stand up to go to the bathroom and I have to sit down?”

“Mama, how did that baby get in your tummy?”

These and similar questions mean that your child is ready to learn more about sexuality.

Parents can learn to answer questions like these in an honest way that children can understand. Talking about sexuality is the first step in helping your child make good decisions about sex as he grows up.

Children learn about sexuality from many sources: music, TV, advertising, friends, and magazines. But the most important influence on a child is still his parents.

Your attitude towards sexuality will color the way you teach your children. Even though it may be uncomfortable sometimes, children need your help learning the facts about sexuality. If you are willing to listen and talk openly, children will come back to you with questions as they get older.

### What should children know, and when?

Child development specialists have determined that children begin to understand that they are male or female, and that certain roles go with those titles, at a very young age. These roles are a basic part of our sexuality, and much more than the old “birds and bees.”

By age five a child should:

- Use correct terms for body parts, including the reproductive organs.
- Understand and identify concepts of “maleness” and “femaleness.”
- Understand that their bodies belong to themselves and that they have a right to say “no” to unwanted touch.



- **Be willing to say “no” to physical contact even when it doesn’t seem important.** For example, if your daughter doesn’t want to kiss Grandpa on the cheek, don’t force her to. It will be easier for her to say “no” when it’s very important.
- Be able to talk about body parts without thinking it’s “naughty.”
- Be able to ask trusted adults questions about sexuality.
- Know that sexuality discussions are for private times at home.

In addition, elementary school children (ages six to nine) should:

- Begin studying growth and reproduction in animals and plants.

- Be aware of the life cycle, including sexuality at all ages.
- Know and use the correct words for the body parts of their own and the opposite sex.
- Know how babies are created and born.
- Be able to identify family roles.
- Become familiar and comfortable with the health care system.
- Understand how to develop and maintain friendships.

### What can you do?

*Be prepared before the subject comes up.* Talk to your children about the issues directly and right away. Putting questions off or refusing to answer them may teach the child that sexuality is bad.

*Start early talking about sexuality.*

Start giving your child basic information when he is small so he will feel comfortable asking you questions when he gets older.

*Listen carefully to what the child is saying.* Don’t assume he understands at an adult level.

*Ask questions that tell you the child’s level of understanding before you explain.*

If your child asks why his teacher has a big tummy, ask him if he has any ideas about that. Depending upon the age and experience of the child, he may know nothing or he may have some creative ideas.

*Use correct vocabulary.*

There are several good books at the library that can help you with this.