Sexual Health Education Begins at Home
How to talk to your children about sexual health

Why talk about sexual health?
With so many outside sources such as internet, TV, movies, friends, and magazines providing information that may conflict with parents’ values, it is important that parents and kids talk about sexual health information. Parents must talk about more than just “the facts”, they must share their feelings, values, attitudes and beliefs, and explain why they feel the way they do. To teach our children that sexual health is a natural, real and everyday part of life, parents must keep the subject of sexual health open.

When to talk about sexual health? Now!
Don’t worry about what’s been missed in the past and don’t worry about covering everything all at once. You will have other chances to discuss new information and reinforce important points. Keep your eyes open for “teachable moments” and use them. Be a good listener! When your child asks you a question, try to find out what they already think or know and don’t be surprised at their understanding of sex. Surveys show that children learn facts about sexuality many years before parents talk to them. Just remember—RELAX! Be honest and give information with lots of love. This will open the door for other important conversations later on in life.

How to prepare?
Spend some time checking out books, pamphlets and videos at your local library or visit the Public Health Resource Centre at www.regionofwaterloo.ca/phrc.
You can also call the Sexual Health Program to speak to a Public Health Nurse about your questions. Public Health also offers a program for parents called “Growing Bodies, Open Minds”. This is a free, interactive, two-hour workshop for groups of ten parents or more. The focus is on talking to your children about healthy sexuality. If interested, call 519-883-2267.

Research shows that when parents talk about sexuality with their children, the children are more likely to delay their first sexual experience and to protect themselves against pregnancy and disease when they do have sex. It is ignorance, not knowledge that creates problems.

**Talk Sex — Four Point Plan for Parents**

Things to remember when discussing sexuality:

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<tr>
<th><strong>Facts</strong></th>
<th>Your child deserves an answer and you don’t have to be an expert to respond. Don’t let your emotions affect your response.</th>
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<td><strong>Values</strong></td>
<td>Values are what you believe in. If you want your child to have your values about sexuality, then share your values with them. If not, they may adopt someone else’s values or those that they see in the media.</td>
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<td><strong>Responsibility</strong></td>
<td>When answering a child’s questions on sexuality, be sure to let the child know what you expect of them and what their responsibilities are.</td>
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<td><strong>Self Esteem</strong></td>
<td>Your children will need to have positive feelings about themselves and their body. Answer your child’s questions in a way that will make them feel good about themselves.</td>
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**Other resources**

www.sexualityandu.ca

**Questions?**

Contact your doctor or Region of Waterloo Public Health Sexual Health/Harm Reduction Program.

**Sexual Health/Harm Reduction Program**

Call 519-883-2267 for clinic times or to speak to a nurse

*All clinical and counselling services are free and confidential. No health card is required to receive services.*