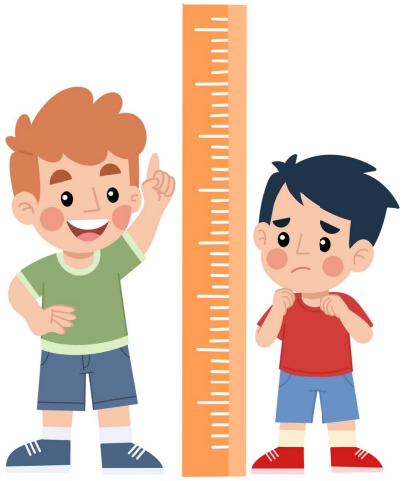
Talking to Children About Puberty, Sex, and Sexuality

PREVENTION (CAREGIVERS - SCHOOL AGE)

Children with autism often don't get the chance to learn about puberty, sex, and sexuality, but these are important topics to help them develop healthy relationships and prevent abuse. Tips to talk about puberty and sexuality include:

It's never too early or too late to begin sex education with kids. The earlier you start talking about these topics, the more comfortable they will be talking about sex, puberty, and sexuality. Talk regularly and keep the communication open whenever they have questions.

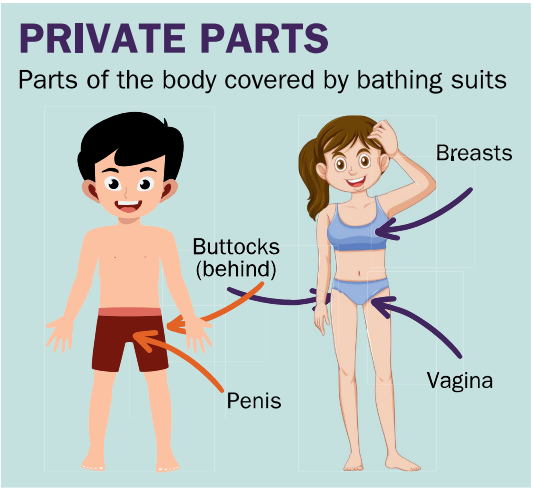
Think about puberty as another stage in growing up. Children need to understand the physical, social, and emotional changes that occur during puberty.



You are the main educator of sex, sexuality, and puberty for your child. It's important to discuss these topics, even if you're not comfortable. Be as open and honest as possible while being developmentally appropriate. If you don't talk to your children about these topics, they'll learn from wherever they can, such as other kids, TV, movies, or the internet, and may not get accurate and appropriate information.

Make sure that your kids feel comfortable asking you questions. You can use informational books or guides to help facilitate discussions if you're not sure what to say. Do a quick search on the internet, or head to your local library to find lots of great resources.

Find out what your children already know or believe about sexuality. Correct any myths that your child may believe about puberty or sex.



Answer questions in a simple and direct way, using a positive tone. Don't be ashamed to answer the "embarrassing" questions. Keep your voice matter-of-fact, calm, and non-judgmental – it keeps the child from feeling guilty or embarrassed.

Use correct terms when talking about body parts or when talking about safe sex. Use images, icons, and pictures to explain and teach concepts as needed.

Discuss what can be done in private (masturbation) and in public when other people are around (hugging).

Be Safe Ask. Listen. Respect.
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