



Prevent Child Abuse Indiana

If you would like information about preventing child abuse, contact:

Prevent Child Abuse Indiana

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Can You Handle Talking about *IT*?

What to say and how to say it



Did you know the term – **sexuality – takes into consideration our bodies, gender, sexual orientation, sexual knowledge, attitudes, values and behaviors? It is much more than sex, and at the heart of who we are.**

We know children need:

- Accurate information about sexuality
- Self-esteem in order to feel good about their bodies, feelings and thoughts
- Skills to make healthy choices about sexual behavior

What you may not know is:

- Parents play a pivotal role in helping children obtain information, attitudes and skills needed for healthy development.
- Experts say that young people whose parents talk with them about sex are more likely to wait longer before having sex, and to use birth control and protection when they do.
- Teens view their parents as the most reliable source for information about sexuality; yet, young people often receive this information when it is too late – or not at all.

How do you know when the time is right to talk about sexuality, sex and protecting children's bodies against unwanted advances? Is there a right time? How old is old enough?

If you are a parent, you probably ponder these questions and may wonder where and how to begin.

Getting Started

Parents may wish to explore their own values before discussing sexuality with a child.

Consider these questions to help you prepare:

- What would you change about the way you learned about sexuality? What do you wish you had known?
- What are your hopes for your child's future?

Two-Way Communication

- Review your values about sexuality.
- Learn the basic facts about sexual health, reproduction and sexually transmitted diseases.
- Do not wait for your child to bring up the topic – a good time is when neither of you has things to do, such as when you would otherwise watch TV or while riding in the car.
- Allow your child to finish talking before you respond.
- Give simple responses, but try to be as specific as possible.
- Ask for feedback, “Is that what you were asking?”
- Show your children you value them by asking open-ended questions, such as, “What would you do if...”

For age-appropriate communication, visit www.pcaain.org (go to Info on Abuse)

One out of every four sexually active teens acquires a sexually transmitted disease, and HIV is rising more quickly among 15-24 year-olds than any other age group.

Personal Safety

The best way to protect children from sexual abuse is to talk with them daily.

- Learn about your child's activities and feelings.
- Encourage your child to discuss problems and concerns with you.
- Begin a dialogue with your child about sexuality using simple and accurate language.
- Teach children to identify their feelings. Let them know they can ask you for help.
- Remind children that sometimes we like touching, and sometimes we do not. Let them know that touching is NEVER a secret. Also let them know they should not touch someone else who says, "No touching."

Child Sexual Abuse

What to do if you think your child has been sexually abused:

- Believe him – children rarely lie about sexual abuse.
- Praise the child for telling you about it.
- Let children know you support them.
- Reassure your child – children fear that they may have been responsible for the incident.
- Control your reaction. Do not let you children see how upset you may be.
- **In Indiana, if you suspect a child is being harmed, contact Child Protective Services at 1-800-800-5556 or the National Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-4-A-CHILD (1-800-422-4453) immediately.**
- Remember, taking action is important. If you do not, other children will continue to be at risk.

Warning Signs:

- Nervousness around adults
- Aggression toward adults or other children
- Inability to stay awake or concentrate for extended periods
- Sudden, dramatic change in activities or personality
- Acting out sexually or showing interest in sex that is inappropriate for that age
- Frequent or unexplained bruises or injuries
- Low self-esteem
- Bathing frequently; obsessive cleanliness

For information on how to report, visit www.pcain.org (go to Info on Abuse)