

THE *simple* FACTS of Life

a practical guide on healthy sexuality for parents, teachers & caregivers

ages
**11 to
14**



Teaching Children Well

Tips, information and resources for parents who want to raise sexually healthy children

FACTS is a guide to help adults break the silence about sexuality and teach children about themselves. Our children's education about their sexuality needs to be open, relaxed, and ongoing from the earliest ages and from the people who know and love them best – their families.

Research has shown that families who talk openly with their children make a positive difference in building a strong foundation for sexual health. Children in those families tend to grow up making healthy choices for themselves and are more protected from sexual exploitation.

During the next few years, your children will experience an incredible rate of growth. Not only are their bodies changing from one month to the next, but also their minds, social lives, and

emotions. As parents, you'll go through your own changes as your children start the path toward young adulthood. It's a time in the lives of parents where an extra measure of understanding can help.

We want you to know that your local family planning education department has people you can talk to and resources you can borrow. Family planning educators believe in working together with parents, churches, schools, and community agencies. We want to make sure that our children have every opportunity to make the best possible lives for themselves.

Helping the next generation of young people understand their sexuality and their changing selves is one of the most privileged, private joys of parenthood. Enjoy!

ARTICLES INSIDE:

Kids Health
Puberty Facts

Keeping Kids Safe
Web Do's + Don'ts

Parents Matter
Teens DO Need You

Talking Tips
About Sex

What Kids Should Know
(8 things)

sex·u·al·ity — Sexuality is more than sex. Sexuality involves the whole person, how we think and feel about ourselves, our bodies and our gender. It also includes sexual relationships with others and reproduction. Parents, teachers, and caregivers teach children values and attitudes about sexuality.

FACTS is a publication of

 **Family Planning Association of Maine**

Ch-Ch-Ch-Changes

the physical changes that turn boys and girls into men and women

On average it takes between four and five years to complete the physical changes of puberty. Along the way adolescents may grow 10 inches and gain 40-50 pounds. That is a lot to get used to! As children's bodies grow this quickly, they may be clumsy and feel awkward. Growing pains are common; kids may describe achy joints and muscles and may feel more tired than usual. Sweat glands kick in and body odor increases.

Some teens will experience oily skin and/or acne. This is a good time to gently reinforce the need for regular bathing/showering and using deodorant.

No matter what changes are taking place at any particular time, or in what order, always remind your children that their body is changing just the way it needs to, even though it may be different from those of their friends.

Girls into Women & Boys into Men

Typical Order of Events

- Breast buds (begins between ages 8 and 13): a hard lump may appear under one or both nipples. The area may be tender or sore. As they grow, one breast may be larger than the other. This is normal.
- Hips broaden and waist gets smaller.
- Vulva and clitoris grow.
- Straight pubic hair begins to grow.
- White, sticky discharge is normal from the vagina. If this changes color or has an unusual odor, see a medical professional.
- Growth spurt begins.
- Pubic hair begins to curl and may get darker in color.
- Menstruation begins (approximately 2 years after start of breast development): may last from 3 days to a week and be irregular for the first two years.
- Underarm hair begins to grow.
- Fat pads on thighs, hips, and arms develop for curvier shape.

Typical Order of Events

- Shoulders broaden.
- Muscles grow.
- Growth of testes and scrotum (begins between ages 10 and 13 ½ on average): one testicle may hang lower than the other. This is normal. Any lumps or discomfort should be brought to a medical professional's attention right away.
- Slight breast development may occur: This is a temporary change and boys are typically very self-conscious if this happens to them.
- Straight pubic hair begins to grow.
- Early voice change occurs.
- First ejaculation possible (approximately 1 year after testes growth).
- Pubic hair curls and may become darker in color.
- Growth spurt begins.
- Underarm hair begins to grow.
- Voice changes again.
- Facial hair increases as well as arm, leg, and chest hair.

Puberty Happens!

KIDS HEALTH

(...ready or not!)



Puberty is a remarkable time of transition during which your child makes an enormous leap toward young adulthood. Embrace it, celebrate it, and remember that additional support and understanding from you will help them feel more secure during this time of incredible change.

Know what to expect

When you know what to expect, you and your child will be better prepared to enjoy the ride – bumpy though it may be!

At no other age are people more different from one another than during puberty. Between the ages of 11 and 14, formerly similar classmates suddenly begin growing apart in several dramatic ways. So it's no wonder that the biggest question on young people's minds is, "Am I Normal?"

Am I normal?

Adolescents spend an amazing amount of time worrying about being different from their peers. As their bodies and minds grow and change, kids may fear that something is wrong with them if they do not know what to expect. One way parents can help ease these fears is to prepare their children ahead of time for the changes that are about to happen.

Most children will pass through puberty changes in the same order; however, the age that each child starts these changes is different. Girls tend to start these changes about two years ahead of boys. (See page 2 for a list of the physical changes to expect.)

Emotional changes

Changes are not just physical. Keep in mind that social and emotional changes are significant as well.

These include:

- Increased moodiness and sensitivity
- Seeking more independence
- Increased tension with parents and siblings
- Wanting to spend more time with friends than with family
- Desire to be liked and to fit in with peers
- Changing friendships
- Interest in romantic relationships

Healthy Sexuality: A life-long process

Unfortunately, many of us got negative messages about sexuality growing up. The truth is that our sexuality is a natural, integral part of being alive. It's not "dirty" or "bad" as some would have us think. We are sexual beings from the time we are born to the time we die... and that's a good thing.

Sexually healthy people:

- Feel good about who they are, male or female
- Understand the basics of how their bodies work
- Know that their bodies belong to them, and decide if, when, or how they can be touched
- Can communicate clearly with people who they care about
- Appreciate and accept their physical selves, and have healthy body images
- Are capable of having close, loving relationships of their own choosing

Hey, Parents!

you are more influential than you might think

According to the research, teens say that parents influence their decisions about sex – more than their peers and more than the media. Amazing isn't it? Just when you think they don't listen to a word you say, they are paying attention. Your teens are watching and your actions speak louder than words.

Teens' bodies and minds are growing faster than they have since they were infants. Teens need

their parents as much as toddlers do for support, guidance, supervision, love, and approval. Don't give up when they push you away.

Teens who are close to their parents and feel supported by them are more likely to wait to have sex, have fewer sexual partners, and use contraception more consistently when they do become sexually active.

So...Talk, Listen, and Love. Your teen needs you.

OPINIONS VALUES + BELIEFS

What do you think?

Above all, your child wants to know what you think – what you believe about relationships, about love, about sex. They already know more by the things you've said over the years and the things you've avoided saying. Now it's time to make it clear.



By sharing your own beliefs and values honestly, without preaching, you give them a frame of reference — a context in which to make their own decisions. As embarrassing as it may be for our children and us, we must simply start the conversation. Sexuality is a big topic and requires more than just “The Talk”. Informal and spontaneous conversations are often the most rewarding. Being your child's primary sexuality educator means paying attention — just talking and listening, about anything and everything. Remember that if we don't talk, they will get their information elsewhere.

Explicit, exploitive messages in the media are everywhere we turn. This is all the more reason why we need to stay involved, keep a dialogue going, and balance out these messages with messages of our own.



How to make
any room in your house (even the car) a

TALKING TIPS

Chat Room

for you and your
pre-teen or teen

Kids in this age group are most likely going to be uncomfortable talking about their changing bodies or growing up. If you are just beginning to talk about these issues, your child may be confused or embarrassed. Even if you and your child have talked easily in the past, it may now feel difficult. Don't give up!

Actually, it can be easy to start a discussion, even about very personal things. And remember, nobody – least of all young people – wants to hear a lecture. Casual conversations are often the best. The car is often one of the best places for having a conversation. You can be close together and talk about personal things without making eye contact.

Teachable Moments

Use “teachable moments” whenever possible to help you talk with your child about sexuality issues. Teachable moments happen everyday. Use television, movies, or the Internet to get things started.

Ask open-ended questions when watching TV, like “What do you think about how they portray women?” or “Why do you think that couple is having a hard time talking honestly about their feelings?”

Talk about their favorite songs and what the words to these songs mean to them.

Use news stories to talk about safety, values, and responsibility.

Listen more than you talk. Your children might surprise you with their insight.

Don't criticize. Be shockproof. Sometimes children are just seeing where your boundaries are.

Keep talking. Remember that this is not about having the “big talk”. This is about having “lots of talks” together and making the topic of sexuality easier.

Answer questions and talk about the changes they are going through. If you don't know the answers, look them up together.

Allow yourself to make mistakes or be embarrassed. Your child will appreciate that you are trying.

Too much information. Cover small amounts of information at a time. Don't try to tell them everything you want them to know all at once.

Share a silly story about when you went through puberty – some misinformation you or your friends believed. Laughing together is a great way to connect!

Try a conversation starter like, “When I was about your age, I felt weird talking to my parents about body changes and sex, even though I had a lot of questions. What can I do to help you feel comfortable asking me questions?”

Respect their privacy. If they do share something personal, let them know that you won't tell your friends or their grandparents the things they said.



8

Things Children This Age Should Know

- 1 Everyone grows at their own rate. There is no way to speed up or slow down puberty changes.
- 2 Physical, social, and emotional changes will occur throughout adolescence.
- 3 Understand the meanings of sexuality-related terms, for example, intercourse, oral sex, orgasm.

- 4 Masturbation is a normal and private activity.
- 5 Beliefs and rules about dating and sexual relationships differ from family to family.
- 6 Pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) are a risk of sexual activity — and can be avoided with abstinence or correct use of condoms.



- 7 Abstinence from sexual activity is the only 100% way to avoid pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases.
- 8 Contraceptive methods (used correctly) can prevent pregnancy.

Dating

Are they ready? Are you?

Crushes and first loves are a normal (and exciting!) part of growing up. Adults may think of these relationships as just puppy love but, to the young person, these feelings are real and intense. Developing relationships with new friends, boyfriends or girlfriends is an important part of adolescence. These early relationships can help children learn what is important to them in a friend or romantic partner. They can also have their feelings hurt.

As parents, we of course want to protect them. Plus, even though our children are often ready to jump right into the world of “romance”, we might be thinking, “Whoa!” During this time, some things to remember are:

- Set clear guidelines based on your best judgment. Share your beliefs, concerns and, perhaps, your experiences.
- Listen respectfully to their thoughts and feelings but do not give in to

make peace or to be “cool.” You can modify your rules when it makes sense to do so.

- Ask your child what this relationship means to them or what “dating/going out” means.
- This is a time of transition, a time for teens to begin getting comfortable with their new feelings. Simply holding hands with someone they are attracted to is a natural, safe step to explore being close.
- Make sure your child understands the risks of early sexual activity.
- Research shows that dating a partner who is 2 or more years older puts your child at greater risk for early sexual involvement and pregnancy.
- Consider alternatives to one-on-one dating that you both can live with. Encourage your teen to go out with groups of friends or to have a buddy system.
- Talk with other parents or caregivers who have children the same age. A safe, supportive place to sort through your own feelings can be invaluable.

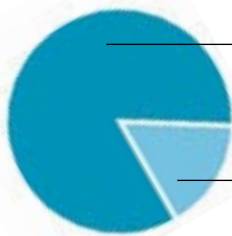
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47%

Talking

It is important for parents to communicate with their teens about sex. In Maine, nearly half (47%) of middle school students have talked with their parents about sex.

How many 11-14 year olds are sexually active?



84%
NO

16%
YES*

The good news is that most 11-14 year olds are not having sex. In fact, abstinence is the norm for Maine middle school students with **84%** reporting not ever having had sex.

At the same time, the **16%** of middle school teens who are sexually active are at risk for pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases.



Condom use has increased for Maine teens in this age group. In fact, **67%** of sexually active middle school teens reported having used a condom the last time they had sex.

* Unfortunately, the data does not tell us if the teens who have had sex did so with consent.

Source: Maine Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2005

i **Want more info?**
for more information go to
mainefamilyplanning.org

What to do about the Worldwide

KEEPING KIDS

SAFE



The Internet is an amazing source of information and our kids are accessing this in ways we could never have imagined. Unfortunately, there are many sites that are not appropriate for children; some adults use these sites to prey on young people. Even sites that are “kid friendly” can be vehicles for Internet bullying by other kids. Consider these rules to keep your child safe.

- Keep the computer in a public place in the house so a parent can monitor a child’s activity.
- Install and activate parental controls on the computer to limit access to adult sites. Set available e-mail filters on “high” to limit advertising and inappropriate content.
- If your child wants to research topics that are not allowed through the parental filters, do this research together rather than just turning off the controls.
- You may want to make family rules about not participating in chat rooms.
- Make your children promise never to give out private information online (or on the phone). Private information includes their name, address, phone number, school, or pictures of themselves.
- Have your children agree to show an adult any pictures, messages, web sites or e-mails that make them uncomfortable or that ask for private information.
- Tell your child it is never safe to meet someone in person who they have connected with online. Your child should let an adult know immediately if anyone asks.
- If you allow your child to have a web page through your e-mail provider or on a site such as myspace.com, approve the content and monitor it regularly.
- Contact the police if you are suspicious of any messages your child receives. Do not dismiss inappropriate behavior or think that you can control it on your own. Your child may not be the only young person being targeted.

Check all that apply:

Gay

Straight

Not sure

If you are a parent in a heterosexual (male-female) relationship, sexual orientation may not be something that’s on your radar screen. “Sexual orientation” refers to who you are attracted to. “Homosexual, gay and lesbian” are terms used to describe someone who is sexually attracted to someone of the same sex — males to males, females to females. As your child’s sexuality develops, their orientation often becomes more clear – to themselves if not to you. Some children, on the other hand, are not sure who they are attracted to and will enter a time of “questioning.”

Regardless of your comfort level or your beliefs, it

is important for you to love your child for who they are, unconditionally. Because the research shows that 10% of the population is attracted to the same sex, chances are that one of your child’s classmates, if not your own child, may have a homosexual or bisexual (attracted to both sexes) orientation. Make your home a welcoming place. Help your child feel safe by using language that is inclusive and open, referring to “partner” instead of boyfriend or girlfriend. This can be an extremely difficult time for any young person who is gay or questioning their orientation. Your acceptance and love can make all the difference.

ORIENTATION

Family Life + Outreach Educators

The Family Planning Association of Maine is here to help! Our Family Life Education Services and Community Outreach Programs offer a network of 16 professionals across the state to help parents, schools, and communities – from resources to programs and consulting. We tailor our services to fit your needs. From Presque Isle to Portland, there are experienced educators in your community whose expertise can make a difference in the sexual health of your youth. Give us a call! We are here to help!



Contact Us

for more information about health and sexuality issues contact FPA

toll-free:

800-525-3228

(1-800-525-FACT)

e-mail: info@mainefamilyplanning.org

or visit our web site: www.mainefamilyplanning.org.

We offer...

- Programs for parents who want to raise sexually healthy children — available through schools and churches
- Age-appropriate booklists and web sites for you and your child to get the conversation going
- Curriculum consulting and teacher training for school districts
- Educational programs for community agencies such as Head Start, Boys & Girls Clubs, and teen centers
- A resource library – books, curricula, and videos

FACTS

is available for
3 age groups:

- **up to age 4**
- **ages 5-10**
- **ages 11-14**



**Family Planning
Association of Maine**

www.mainefamilyplanning.org

Family Planning Association of Maine

Become a member today!



Your financial support is critical. Without it, we can't do our jobs advocating for the reproductive health programs and services you care about. As a supporter, you will receive our legislative newsletter, special policy and program updates, and alerts on action happening in Augusta and Washington D.C.

Most importantly, your contribution directly helps meet the needs of low-income women and teens, including the following:

- Family planning services
- Comprehensive family life & sexuality education
- Outreach education services
- Legislative advocacy—defending the reproductive health care rights that Maine women, men, and teens now have, and advancing access to the full range of reproductive health services.

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