



Sexuality in adolescents

by Dr. Jitendra Nagpal

Sexuality is a central aspect of being human throughout life and encompasses sex, gender identities and roles, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy and reproduction. Sexuality is experienced and expressed in thoughts, fantasies, desires, beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviours, practices, roles and relationships. While sexuality can include all of these dimensions, not all of them are always experienced or expressed. Sexuality is influenced by the interaction of biological, psychological, social, economic, political, cultural, ethical, legal, historical, religious and spiritual factors.

Adolescent sexual and reproductive health education must involve young people as key decision-makers in program design, implementation, and evaluation. It must provide comprehensive, accurate information in a manner appropriate to their age span and gender and addresses barriers to accessing health and information services by empowering adolescents to make life choices that are best for them.

One should bear in mind that children want to talk to their parents about their values. Instead of just waiting for the questions, one should reward the queries raised by children. It is okay if you don't know the answer and it is natural to feel uncomfortable. But one should find teachable moments to listen to your children.

Facts are not enough but the bottom line is that one should educate their children without making any sexual discrimination. Parents should educate their children; boys and girls, on fair basis. Simply just take out the time to think about what you want to teach them about sexuality. It is both parents' to teach children about sexuality. Use words and ideas that are appropriate for your child's level of development. It is okay to make a mistake but remember that actions speak louder than the words. There is no such thing as too late. One should understand that there is a difference between childhood sexuality and adult sexuality. Sexuality education is an ongoing process and don't forget to talk about the joys of sexuality.

As we know that we all are growing and changing throughout our lives and everyone develops in his/her own way. Each one's way is unique, different, special and absolutely right for him or her. Everybody's body is private and deserves respect. Sexuality is a beautiful girl—something to be handled wisely.

Challenges faced by adolescents

- Social discomfort in accepting adolescent sexuality
- Peer/cultural pressure
- Policy barriers
- Perceived or real bias by providers
- Lack of basic reproductive health information
- Lack of skills in negotiating safe sexual relationships
- Lack of access to affordable, confidential health services
- High risk behavior

Key areas in which policies can reduce barriers to access and quality

- Provision of services
- Access to contraceptives
- Curriculum content in schools
- Abortion restrictions
- Confidentiality and parental/spousal consent
- Information, prevention and treatment of STIs

Use teaching methods that involve students by including information on risks and protection. Reinforce values/norms against unprotected sex by encouraging behavior change if needed. Social pressure should be addressed with utmost care by practicing communication and negotiation skills. Train those who implement the program by addressing emotional aspects of all human beings. One should openly address adolescent sexuality and issues like emotional, physical and mental changes, peer pressure, sexual role, orientation, capability and coercion, etc. by involving both males and females. The focus should be on behavior change e.g., delaying sexual activity, limiting the number of partners, using condoms for disease prevention by involving youth in design and implementation process.

Things that may help teenagers with sex

- Your parents must know something about sex if they made you, even if they can't talk about it
- Most of sex is not about having sexual intercourse. Don't be in too much of a hurry—think of all the sexy things that you can do without having intercourse itself
- Remember the main erogenous zone is the brain (even if you think otherwise) so use it as well as your other sex bits
- There are many different places you can go for contraceptive advice
- Remember the down sides to sex are pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), disappointment and emotional turmoil. OK, the up side is the pleasure.
- Even if your parents don't mind you sleeping with your partner at home, remember that the rest of the house may not necessarily want to hear you
- For teenagers, condoms have to be the best method of contraception. 📺

Sexuality education is an ongoing process and don't forget to talk about the joys of sexuality.

Things that might help parents with their teenagers' sex scene

- Try to talk about sex and contraception when your children are young enough to be curious (ages seven to ten) but not too old to be embarrassed (from puberty onwards)
- If you find the subject of sex too embarrassing, in spite of what you just have done to create them; don't despair. If you cannot talk openly about sex, you are not alone; and most adults are not very good at talking to each other about it either.
- Try getting some good books about sex and contraception which you can 'discreetly' leave around
- Find out what the school is teaching them about sex, contraception and sexually transmitted infections so that you are aware of the major gaps
- You can't dictate who they go out with, and too much disapproval may well keep the unwanted relationship going
- Teenage magazines are a useful source of information about sex; do not be too shocked!
- Education and ambition are the best contraception
- Leave condoms around.



Dr. Jitendra Nagpal
Senior Consultant, Psychiatry,
Moolchand Medcity, New Delhi