

Why Sexual Health Education Matters

Families are children's most important sexual health educators. A series of surveys of Canadian parents have consistently found that over 85 percent of parents agreed with the statement "Sexual health education should be provided in the schools." (McKay and Bissell 2010)

Youth who have access to comprehensive sexual health education from a young age are more likely to postpone sexual involvement until they are older and to be safer and healthier when they do become sexually active.

Children and youth today face mass amounts of sexualized media messages. Sexually explicit content and misinformation about sexuality and sexual health are highly accessible to children and youth.

Research tells us that many sexual offenders will test a child's personal safety awareness to determine whether there is risk a child will tell. Offenders are less likely to victimize a child if they think a child will tell. Teaching children about personal safety strategies will reduce the possibility of victimization.

Helpful Resources

- **Canadian Guidelines for Sexual Health Education**
www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/publicat/cgshe-ldnemss/pdf/guidelines-eng.pdf
(Public Health Agency of Canada 2008)
- **Growing up OK!**
www.gov.ns.ca/hpp/publications/GrowingUpOkbooklet_En.pdf
(Nova Scotia Public Health Services 2010)
- **It's Easier Than You Think!: Talking with Your Children about Sexual Health and Well-Being**
www.sexualhealthaccess.org/images/pdf/parent-brochure_web_6pg.pdf
(Sexual Health Access Alberta 2009)
- **Sexual Health Education in the Schools: Questions and Answers, 3rd Edition**
www.sieccan.org/pdf/she_q&a_3rd.pdf
(Alexander McKay and Mary Bissell 2010)
- **Talk Sex**
www.gov.ns.ca/hpp/publications/11001_TalkSexPamphlet_En.pdf
(Nova Scotia Public Health Services 2008)

Let's talk about ...



Sexual Health Education



Sexual health education is an important component of the health education curriculum. Access to comprehensive, age-appropriate sexual health education contributes to the health and well-being of children and youth. Schools share a responsibility with families and communities in providing age-appropriate and developmentally appropriate sexual health information.



This pamphlet is part of a series to inform parents about the Nova Scotia Department of Education Public School Program. For more information, contact your child's teacher.

Let's talk about ...

Sexual Health Education

Your child will learn about sexual health concepts from his or her classroom teacher in a safe, caring, inclusive, and non-judgmental environment. Your child's teacher uses resources and teaching materials that have been reviewed, evaluated, and follow the *Canadian Guidelines for Sexual Health Education* (Public Health Agency of Canada 2008).

Resources for sexual health education are inclusive and acknowledge that not all people are heterosexual nor are all families led by heterosexual parents.

What is sexual health education?

Sexual health education builds a foundation of knowledge and skills beginning in grade primary through to grade 9 related to human development, healthy and respectful relationships, positive self-image and self-worth, decision making, media literacy, and prevention of negative sexual health outcomes.

What your child is learning in school is

- age and developmentally appropriate
- following national and international guidelines
- addressing curriculum outcomes within health education
- facilitated by your child's classroom teacher and is not a one-time event delivered by a nurse, doctor, or guest speaker
- culturally sensitive

What will your child learn?

Your child will learn

- what makes up a family / diverse family structures
- how to identify a safe and trusted adult
- the proper names for body parts, including what areas of the body are private
- how to identify and describe feelings
- concepts related to sexual abuse
- the components of a healthy friendship
- the importance of a positive self-identity, including body image
- about gender and gender identity
- personal safety within home, school, online, and community environments
- physical and emotional changes associated with puberty
- that we can make safe decisions
- that sexual orientation is part of our personal identity and homophobia has harmful effects
- to think critically about media messages
- the value of a healthy body image
- what is meant by the terms "sexuality" and "sexual health"

How can you support your child's sexual health education?

- Talk with your child's teacher to learn what will be addressed during the course of the year at school and how you can support that learning at home.
- Seek information that will help you become more comfortable with the questions your child may ask.
- Ask your child's teacher to recommend age-appropriate and developmentally appropriate books that may be available for loan through the school or the public library, or available at book stores.
- Value health education as part of your child's healthy growth and development.
- Value social and emotional learning as much as academic learning.

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