



# Teen Clinic Corner: THE TALK

Are you comfortable talking about sex and healthy relationships with adolescents? Don't worry most people aren't. Teen Clinic provides Comprehensive Sexual Health Education in schools, but teens may not hear or understand everything they need to know to make healthy choices, that's where you come in! According to the CDC, young people want to hear from their parents/caregivers about these topics. This same research tells us that young people who have regular conversations with their parents/caregivers about sex and relationships are less likely to take risks with their sexual health and be healthier overall. You only need to be willing to talk and listen with young people.

It's common to feel overwhelmed when talking to young people about sex; in fact, they are probably embarrassed, too. To make this easier, try to have several small conversations rather than one big "talk" when it comes to sex and relationships. Starting from a young age, you can teach children medically accurate terms for their body parts. This can help reduce shame related to bodies and gives them the language to communicate with adults if something is wrong. As young people begin socializing, conversations about respect, boundaries, and consent become more important. These conversations lay the groundwork for healthy sexuality and relationships later in life.

**Here are some tips on how to answer sensitive questions:**

- Don't assume or jump to conclusions on why they are asking certain questions. Young people deserve age-appropriate, medically accurate information about sex and relationships, without being shamed or judged.
- You can always say, "Tell me what you know

about that" or "What have you heard?"

- Keep your answers short and simple and define terms you think a teen might not have heard before.
- After providing an answer, keep communication open. You can say, "What other questions about this stuff do you have?" or "What's going on in your life/at school that made you think about this?"
- After answering a question, check back with them to make sure they understood.
- If you don't know the answer, you can always say something like, "That's a great question, but I'm unsure of the answer. Let's look it up together!"
- Use everyday moments to start conversations. For example, if a friend or family member announces a pregnancy, you can start with an open-ended question like, "What do you know about pregnancy?" and go from there.
- Be direct, be open and listen to their answers. Fill in information they don't know and correct misinformation when you hear it.
- Practice talking to another adult before starting conversations about safer sex and pregnancy.
- As a parent or caregiver, stay informed about accurate information regarding sex and sexual health. Have reliable books about anatomy, puberty, and healthy relationships available for young people.

If you take the initiative and start these conversations with young people, you can ensure they receive accurate information from someone they trust instead of peers or social media. Most importantly, focus on making sure that young people feel comfortable coming to you with questions about their sexual health. Being a trusted parent or caregiver allows you to be a part of the young person's growth.

## HELPFUL RESOURCES

[amaze.org](https://www.amaze.org) • [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov) • [mayoclinic.org](https://www.mayoclinic.org) • [plannedparenthood.org](https://www.plannedparenthood.org)  
[powertodecide.org](https://www.powertodecide.org) • [thriveokc.org](https://www.thriveokc.org)