

# Talking with my 5-8 year old

## Normal Development:

### • Physical Changes:

- Starting to lose baby teeth and grow adult teeth
- Developing more muscle mass and strength
  - Action: Talk to your child about the changes that will take place when they start puberty, including growing pubic hair, breast buds, and underarm hair. Most kids begin to show signs of puberty around 9-10 years old, start talking about it now.

### • Social Changes:

- Beginning to form trusting relationships
  - Action: Role model loving relationships
- Playing doctor is common, as your child is discovering his/her body and wonders what other bodies look like
- Attending school and learning to follow directions and control impulses while improving language and social skills
- Learning your family values and will be encountering beliefs and practices that differ from those of his/her family
- Wanting to act independently yet unable to consistently make good decisions
- Experiencing the growing influence of peers, and prefers to associate with same sex peers

## Risky Behaviors:

- Spending time away from home and encountering strangers
  - Action: Make rules for interacting with and avoiding strangers as well as how to get help in an emergency
- Trusting people without question
  - Action: Tell your child it is never alright for an older child or adult to ask the child to keep secrets from parents, look at/touch private parts without permission, or ask the child to look at/touch private parts
- Looking to friends, television, and internet for information on sex
  - Action: Tell your child you are there to answer any questions

## Conversation Starters:

Assure your child that no topic is off limits & you are always available to talk.

- You can always come to me with any questions or problems.

- Do you have friends at school? What are their names?
- You should feel safe at home and school. Have you ever been picked on?
- What would you do if a stranger asked you to get in a car?
- Your body is private & should not be touched by anyone but you.
- What websites have you looked at?

### **What if I can't answer their questions?**

These recommended websites are resources for parents and other family members to read about sexual health, puberty, relationships, pregnancy, and myths. You can always call your health care provider!

- Parent's Sex Ed Center ([www.advocatesforyouth.org/parents](http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/parents))
- Talking with Kids about Tough Issues ([www.talkingwithkids.org](http://www.talkingwithkids.org))
- Families are Talking ([www.familiesaretalking.org](http://www.familiesaretalking.org))

### **What if my child doesn't ask the questions?**

Continue to provide information on sexuality even if children do not ask for it. Children may ask fewer questions even though they have lots of curiosity. Utilize "learning moments" like scenes from TV or movies and new births.

### **Other sources:**

These books are written for youth and are available at your public library:

- *Did the sun shine before you were born?* By Sol and Judith Gordon
- *It's perfectly normal: changing bodies, growing up, sex, and sexual health.* By Robie H. Harris
- *Dr. Ruth talks to kids : where you came from, how your body changes, and what sex is all about.* By Dr. Ruth Westheimer