

Parent/Trusted Adult at Home Materials

Talking about Teen Sexual Health

Greetings from Candor Health Education! We are happy to partner with you in keeping kids healthy, happy and safe!

Soon your child will be attending our *Teen Sexual Health* program and you may be wondering more about what he or she will be learning. This letter will provide you with an overview of the program content, general tips for talking with your child and getting the conversations started, along with the rationale for why it is so important to have these conversations. You can find additional information along with FAQs about the program on [our website](#).

We know that parents are the most influential people in a child's life, and we hope to provide you with the information and tools that you need to support your teen.

Teen Sexual Health Program Content

The class is taught through a storytelling lens of a teen advisory period at a school. In the story, the characters add their questions to an anonymous question box. The school social worker, Ms. Valeda, acts as the teacher in the story to help the students with their questions and deliver the program content. The program has three overarching objectives. To help students:

- Understand there are influences that impact their sexuality
- Recognize the decisions they make can impact their sexual health
- Identify their own strengths that can help them make decisions about their sexual health

The following topics are explored in the context of the story. Through the questions that Ms. Valeda receives in the question box, the program addresses these topics:

- What is sexuality? What influences our sexuality?
- Sexual Health: a part of overall health – includes physical, social and emotional aspects
- Communication - importance of using clear, scientific language; how miscommunication happens in relationships
- Define orientation, identity and expression
- Forms of sexual contact - including what is sexual intercourse
- Abstinence, barrier and hormonal methods of contraception/birth control
- Sexual history
- STI's – symptoms, consequences, methods to reduce or eliminate risk and seeking medical treatment
- Consent: what does it look like? When do you need it?
- Sexting: What is it? What are the potential consequences?

In the class, students receive a card with a QR code, giving them access to an online booklet that reviews content from the program. You can access [that booklet here](#).

Conversation Starters/Conversation Topics

Conversations with your child about sex start early and are on-going. Not all topics are addressed in one conversation. Conversations are on-going and build over time. By having regular conversations, your child will feel more comfortable coming to you to talk about this sensitive topic.

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- Look for teachable moments when watching TV, news stories, a family member becomes pregnant, etc.
- When teachable moments arise, offer an open-ended question. (i.e., What do you know about how pregnancy happens? Or What would you do if someone you were dating started acting like the character in the TV show? Or Do you know anyone that this happened to?)
- To get at issues such as sexting, you might ask, "What do you think it means to be respectful on social media or when texting?"
- To talk about consent, try analogies or scenarios – If your cat does not want you to pet it, do you? If you want to have a few of someone else's French fries, do you just take them off their plate or do you ask? If they say yes, does that mean that you can just take the fries anytime or do you also need to ask the next time?
- Empower your child to be able to evaluate risks and make good decisions. Help your child to understand that they have a gut feeling, an inner voice, and they can and should listen to it.

General tips for talking to your child about sex

- Remain calm and comfortable.
- Have a conversation in the car. It can be more comfortable not having to look at each other and the conversation can be private.
- Avoid overreacting when your teen shares personal information with you.
- Doing some research can help conversations feel more natural.
- If you don't know something offer to look it up together.
- Check for understanding. "Does that answer make sense?" "What do you think about that?"
- Keep lines of communication open before and after the discussions.
- Remember if they don't hear it from you, they will from someone else.

But, do I have to have this conversation?

According to many researchers, the answer is "yes." Studies from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) have shown that teens who report talking with their parents about sex are more likely to delay having sex and to use condoms when they do have sex. The research shows that teens make better choices when they know the risks.

If you are interested in staying up-to-date on health topics impacting youth and young adults, [register here](#) to receive the monthly Candor Health Education community newsletter. We have several [resources on our website](#) for parents to approach difficult topics with their child. We look forward to partnering with you and encourage you to keep talking with your child...they are listening.

Sincerely,
The Candor Health Education Team