# Parent and Caregiver frequently asked questions

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<th>Questions</th>
<th>Should parents or teachers be teaching our children about sex?</th>
<th>What will my child learn as part of human sexuality in primary school?</th>
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<td>Should parents or teachers be teaching our children about sex?</td>
<td>Schools are only one part of the jigsaw in educating children about relationships and sexuality education. Teachers and parents can work in partnership to ensure consistent messages and accurate information is presented to children in order to support them in developing healthy, safe and positive attitudes towards sexuality.</td>
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<td>What will my child learn as part of human sexuality in primary school?</td>
<td>Human sexuality is part of the Growth and Development strand of the Personal Development, Health and Physical Education (PDHPE) syllabus. Your child will learn about the human body, how it develops throughout life and the changes that occur during puberty. Developing positive and meaningful relationships, communication and decision-making skills are all aspects of learning about sexuality. Content develops and is introduced in an age appropriate manner. More information on the content of the K-6 PDHPE syllabus can be found on the Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards website.</td>
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<td>Is my child too young to know about sexuality?</td>
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<td>Will teaching about sex make my child want to have it?</td>
<td>No. The teaching of human sexuality is not about the act of sex. Human sexuality is about providing students with the knowledge about how their body develops. Sexuality education lays the foundations for students by learning the correct names for parts of the body, understanding principles of human reproduction, exploring family and interpersonal relationships, learning about safety, and developing confidence. These can then be built upon gradually, in line with the age and development of a student. Comprehensive sexuality and sexual health education promotes postponement of first sex</td>
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What if a student discloses abuse or risk of harm?

Can condoms be given out to high school students?

What does sexuality education in primary schools include?

What resources are available for parents and caregivers who would like to provide sexuality education at home?

What do I do if my child comes home and starts asking questions?

Answer your child’s questions honestly, openly and as best as you can. If you are unsure of the answer, admit that you don’t know and find out the answer. This could be done together with your child. There are many informative books and Internet web sites that will be able to help you with your answers.

I can’t remember doing much sexuality education at school and I turned out fine. Why should my child do it?

When you think back to your health or personal development lessons at school, you probably had one-off lessons delivered by a guest speaker requiring you to remember the “dos and don’ts” and recall a lot of facts. Students today are exposed to much more explicit material relating to sexuality through the media and as such sexuality education today is different. There is still a knowledge base component; students still need to have the most accurate and up-to-date information. An emphasis is placed on empowering students to become responsible, informed decision-makers and in developing their communicating, problem-solving and decision-making skills.

Do teachers need to inform parents they are implementing sexuality or sexual health education or Child Protection Education with their class?

The school has a responsibility to inform parents, prior to the occasion, of the specific details of the program, so that parents have time to exercise their rights of withdrawing their child from a particular session on certain controversial issues. In this regard, a parent’s wish must be respected. Source: NSW Department of Education, Controversial Issues in Schools Policy Implementation Procedures.

This should be applied to the introduction of external speakers on controversial issues and the study of controversial material to supplement curriculum programs. Where parents and carers indicate they wish to withdraw their child from a program it is useful to negotiate which parts of the program they are concerned about. Schools should implement a consultative process to ensure parents and carers have opportunity to participate in discussions on both curriculum content and teaching and learning materials where appropriate to ascertain whether parts of the program need to be modified.

There are many misconceptions about what students learn about and how students learn in sexuality and sexual health education. Communication with parents and carers assists the community to better understand the content and aims of the programs.

Establishing how parents and carers will be informed about programs and involved in consultation is a school-based decision.
How early should the names of body parts be introduced?

It is considered age appropriate and best practice to introduce the correct names of the body parts as early as kindergarten, including the reproductive and sexual parts such as penis, vulva, breast, testicles and bottom.

Knowing these names enables a child to communicate clearly if they need to get help; and in particular in cases of abuse or injury.

The classroom teacher should communicate with parents/caregivers with adequate notice to ensure they understand the concepts and proposed learning sequence their child will be participating in.

What happens if parents or caregivers request to withdraw students from relationships, sexuality and sexual health education?

Principals and teachers have a responsibility to inform parents, prior to the occasion, of the specific details of the program, so that parents have time to exercise their rights of withdrawing their child from a particular session on certain controversial issues. In this regard, a parent’s wish must be respected. Source: NSW Department of Education, Controversial Issues in Schools Policy Implementation Procedures.

Where parents and carers indicate they wish to withdraw their child from a program it is useful to negotiate which parts of the program they are concerned about. Teachers and Principals should implement a consultative process to ensure parents and carers have opportunity to participate in discussions on both curriculum content and teaching and learning materials where appropriate to ascertain whether parts of the program need to be modified.

Teachers and Principals must ensure that reasonable efforts are made to provide alternative means for students who are withdrawn from lessons to achieve the same outcomes as other students. Parents must be advised that the student’s achievement and assessment may be adversely affected by withdrawal from particular classes.

What if a student discloses abuse or risk of harm?

Employees of the NSW Department of Education have responsibilities under the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 relating to the reporting of concerns about suspected risk of significant harm and risk of harm to children and young people to their principal or workplace.
The Mandatory Reporter Guide (MRG) can assist in making an informed decision regarding child protection concerns. If concerns about the safety, welfare or wellbeing of children or young people constitute risk of significant harm, principals must report these to the Child Protection Helpline on 133627.

The Child Wellbeing Unit can be contacted on 9269 9400 when staff are unclear about how to use the MRG, wish to get advice on the MRG or the MRG indicates to contact the Child Wellbeing Unit.

Students should be made aware at the beginning of educational programs that disclosures that indicate they may be at risk of harm will be reported to the school principal in all instances. This includes personal disclosures related to instances of abuse, sexual activity under the legal age of consent or drug use.

It is important to enable students to withdraw if they find issues personally confronting and to protect them from making harmful disclosures. Equally, it is important that teachers are prepared for issues that arise as a result of a student making a disclosure. Information on how to create a supportive learning environment and teaching strategies to protect students from making harmful public disclosures can be accessed on the Teaching Sexual Health website.

Can condoms be given out to high school students?

The NSW Department of Education does not support the distribution of condoms to students or the installation of condom vending machines in secondary schools.

Secondary school students have access to developmentally appropriate information on sexual health, including contraception. If appropriate, students may be referred to relevant health services.

In NSW public schools, sexuality and sexual health education should reflect a philosophy where abstinence from sexual activity for school-aged students is the key focus. It should also emphasise a positive preventative approach, harm reduction and safer sex strategies without necessarily normalising sexual activity for school-aged students. Where appropriate, condoms may be used during a sexuality education or sexual health lesson on contraception. It is not, however, the school's role to distribute condoms to students.

PDHPE provides students with the knowledge, understanding and skills required to make positive decisions about health, safety and wellbeing and develop and maintain respectful and healthy relationships.

PDHPE curriculum in NSW aims to assist students to abstain from or delay the debut of sexual relations, reduce the frequency of unprotected sexual activity, reduce the number of sexual partners and increase the use of protection against unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) during sexual intercourse.
What does sexuality education in primary schools include?

Sexuality education is part of the mandatory K-6 PDHPE syllabus and includes links to relationships, personal identity and the body. Content must be covered in each stage of learning through the K-6 PDHPE syllabus.

In sexuality education, student learning is focused on learning about the emotional, social and physical aspects of growing up, relationships, identity, reproduction, diversity, gender, human sexuality and sexual health.

It is important to design sexuality education programs that highlight and value the uniqueness of each individual and incorporate activities that will enhance self-esteem, body image and self-acceptance. Students need to be given opportunities to share their thoughts, feelings and values as individuals and in group situations.

Through the K-6 PDHPE syllabus, sexuality education is comprised of various content strands. Although the Growth and Development strand contains the bulk of human sexuality content, teachers should integrate this strand with other content strands to create meaningful sexuality education programs for students. The image shows the interaction on these strands and the overlap with Child Protection Education with sexuality education.

Programming decisions are best made by individual schools and are dependent upon the school’s K–6 PDHPE scope and sequence and the mapping of outcomes across the Stages.
What resources are available for parents and caregivers who would like to provide sexuality education at home?

The publication Talk Soon. Talk Often. A Guide for Parents Talking to their Kids About Sex aims to increase the confidence of parents when talking to their children about relationship and sexuality topics.

WA Health have produced a range of booklets which address the changes that happen during puberty and how children and young people can care for themselves during this time. These resources include the ‘Puberty’ series - Boys and Puberty and Girls and Puberty. The Relationships, Sex and Other Stuff booklet by WA Health is for teenagers (13 years or older).

Family Planning NSW Brochure Me Myself and I: Puberty information for everybody is designed for children aged 8 to late adolescence. A number of resources for parents and caregivers are available through the Family Planning NSW website.