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Traditionally, sex talk has mostly been a taboo topic in our society. The average parent or teacher finds it too awkward and embarrassing to broach the concepts of sexuality and healthy relationships with young children. However, keeping in pace with the changing times, it has become essential to talk about the birds and bees in a fair, non embarrassing manner with the kids of today. This eye opening [story](#) by experienced journalist [Kavitha Rao](#) is self explanatory about the urgent need of sex education in children from a young age.

Need for Sex Ed

Sex education will not just make children aware about sex abuse and help them take proper decisions; it will also make them respect the members of the opposite sex and instill a sense of awareness and equality. In the formative years, young children and toddlers can be made aware about their body parts while playing with dolls or animal toys.

Purnima, mum to two young kids, feels that sex talk is not like getting a license at sixteen. A gradual and systematic revelation of facts as and when children ask questions is important. "The right time to talk is when they ask, not some hypothetical future period," Purnima adds.

Let us look at some of the common questions raised by children in the age group 5-8 about their bodies, sex and relationships.

“How are babies made?”

The best answer to this question would be the correct answer. “Children at this age are not asking for an entire course on human biology and I strongly suggest answering all questions about sex and reproduction simply and straightforwardly at a level that is appropriate for the child who is asking,” says Dr Cara Natterson, pediatrician and best-selling author of *The Care and Keeping of You* series.

You can talk about the concept of animals mating and giving birth, or you can simply explain that when mom and dad love each other and want to have a baby, a cell from dad unites with a cell in mom and grows inside mom’s tummy to become a baby.

It’s important not to give misleading answers like babies are bought from a store or hospital or gifted by a stork.

“How will the baby come out of your tummy, mom?”

Deepa Kumar, CEO and Thought Leader at HowToTellYourChild.com, feels that a parent-child relationship should be built on trust and not lies. Instead of asking the child to shut up or showing signs of embarrassment or irritation, it is best to explain the anatomy of a woman and show the child where the baby comes out from. Take help of a diagram or a book listed below if you feel uncomfortable doing this on your own. “If we cannot establish trust with the child and lie to the child, there will always be topics that the child will find uncomfortable to discuss with a parent and this could even be dangerous in future,” Deepa says.

“I’ve heard a friend say that uncle is gay. What does that mean?”

You can answer this in simple words: a boy loving another boy is called gay. “A parent could say that loving an opposite gender is what is considered normal by traditional people but being cosmopolitan and non-judgmental in today’s world, it demands that we accept people who live with or have same sex relationships,” says Chandrika R Krishnan, a mother of two who has 20+ years of teaching experience across all age groups. It’s essential to tell a child not to call his friends ‘gay’ because that word has now become a common word of abuse, Chandrika feels.

“Why is my baby sister not like me?”

As children grow up, they develop curiosity about their bodies, about nature and everything else in the world around them. Children’s book author, Robie. H. Harris, has authored several books like [It’s Not the Stork, It’s Perfectly Normal](#) and [It’s So Amazing! A Book about Eggs, Sperm, Birth, Babies and Families](#). She feels that asking and then finding answers can help to make our kids better thinkers as well as responsible friends and citizens.

An excerpt from her book IT’S SO AMAZING! reads, ‘Most parts of our bodies—our fingers, our noses, our legs, our arms, our eyes, our hearts, our lungs, our stomachs, our buttocks —are the same and look the same whether we are born female or male. Some of the private parts we are born with are not the same.’

As the private parts are perfectly normal parts of our bodies, parents and teachers should mention them by their real names and refrain from using nicknames. “Children could end up feeling that those parts are ‘bad parts’ and feel a sense of shame, if they are never mentioned or talked about in their presence. What is healthy is for children to feel proud of all of the parts of their bodies,” Robie says.

“Why have you blocked some of the sites on the internet on my computer? What is there on these sites?” Or “What are these uncles and aunties doing inside the TV?”

The boom in information technology and the availability of so much inappropriate content over the internet and other media has made it very difficult to monitor what our children is exposed to. Sexually explicit content in television or print, sexual violence and abuse, body image issues and swearing have become a part of everyday life.

Aarti. C Rajaratnam, parenting expert and co-author of [Parenting: Innocence to InnerSense](#) advises parents to make time to do some healthy discussions over the media and its impact on their children. “When inappropriate content is seen, do not switch channels immediately because this heightens curiosity and will make your kids explore these things in your absence,” Aarti says. It is advisable to block channels or websites beforehand, but if parents still encounter inappropriate content, Aarti advises them to discuss it as a family. If children ask why some channels or sites are blocked, calmly explain that their content is not appropriate for them at this age and you do not want them to get wrong ideas because you love them.

Resources:

It’s Not the Stork! A Book About Girls, Boys, Babies, Bodies, Families and Friends By Robie. H. Harris

Buy On: [Amazon USA](#) | [Amazon India](#)

The Care and Keeping of You 2: The Body Book for Older Girls By Dr Cara Natterson

Buy On: [Amazon USA](#) | [Amazon India](#)

Parenting: Innocence to InnerSense By Aarti C Rajaratnam and Brinda Jayaraman

Buy On: [Amazon USA](#) | [Amazon India](#)

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Arundhati Nath

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