

Sex Education in Schools

For Moms

In most public schools in the U.S., children are taught a course on 'sex education'. The goal of the class is to provide students with an awareness of their bodies and the consequences of sexual activity. This usually takes place in grades 6, 7, or 8 by one of the teachers in the school. Often, boys and girls are split up for separate classes. In many states, parents are required to give consent before their child participates in the class and are often allowed to sit in on the instruction.

Girls learn about both male and female anatomy and gain an understanding of their reproductive parts, reproduction, conception and fetal development. They learn about puberty, including menstrual cycles, body image and shape, hormones, and growing hair on their legs, underarms, and private parts. They also learn about sex and how to protect against sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) as well as HIV/AIDS. Topics also include sexual violence prevention, condoms, healthy relationships, and different forms of birth control. Most public schools teach sex education based on medical facts, rather than values. However private or charter schools may teach about values and sex.

This can be a great time to talk to your daughter and teach her about your family's values about sex and how she can honor these and respect her body. If saving sex until marriage is highly valued in your family or your culture, one way to impress this on your daughter is to create open communication about the topic and begin building a healthy relationship with her early. Acknowledge her feelings and the challenges she may be facing. And don't just focus on the negative aspects of sex, help her focus on other good things like education, sports, and friends that sexual relationships at this age can sometimes take away from.



Sex Education and FGC

FGC is typically not covered in sex education courses, so if your daughter has experienced FGC, learning about the female anatomy may raise a lot of questions. In some cultures, FGC is meant to ensure a girl upholds the value of chastity. However, it's important to remember that the value of chastity can still be honored without FGC. It may seem like kids in the U.S. are more sexually active or have multiple partners, but this is not the case with everyone. Many parents in the U.S. share the same values and concerns you have about your child's sexual activity.





Moms, think about it...

- * Have you talked about sex with your daughter? This can be can be uncomfortable, however it is so important to begin the conversation early on, as she will start hearing bits and pieces at school and from friends.
- * Consider talking to your daughter about how she can protect herself from gender or sex-based violence or sexual assault. It is important she is prepared to protect herself and her body.
- * If you or your daughter struggle to talk about sex with each other, encourage her to find a trusted adult she can have these conversations with. You may also want to talk with your friends about how they talk about sex with their daughters. Learning tips to overcome the awkwardness from each other can be very helpful.



For Daughters

Now that you are older, you will soon take a course at school called 'sex education'. Usually you will take this class when you are in grades 6, 7, or 8 and it will only be with the girls in your grade. You will learn about male and female anatomy and have a better understanding of your private parts. You will learn about puberty, including menstrual cycles, body image and shape, contraceptives, and hormones. And you will learn about sex and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) as well as HIV/AIDS. It might feel awkward to sit in this class and you and your friends might laugh a little, which is normal.

It is unlikely you will learn about FGC in your sex education class. If you have undergone FGC, remember that your anatomy may look a little different from what you learn in school, and that's okay. You should find an older person you trust to talk about this with. It could be your mom, an older sister, an aunt, or a teacher.

Some of your friends might be sexually active already, but it does not mean you have to be. It is better to focus your time on school, extra-curricular activities, and friends. You only get to be your age once and sex can get in the way of you accomplishing your goals. While sex can be a wonderful thing and you may feel like you want to have sex, it is not something to focus on now. Sex requires a lot of maturity and responsibility. Remember it's important to respect your body, mind, and spirit. Sex makes relationships more complicated and when not done responsibly, can lead to consequences you may not be ready for such as getting pregnant, complicating relationships, and contracting a sexually transmitted disease.



Family and cultural views on sex may stem from religious beliefs, traditional views, cultural values, or health implications. It is important for you to think about **YOUR** own views on sex. Where do your beliefs come from?



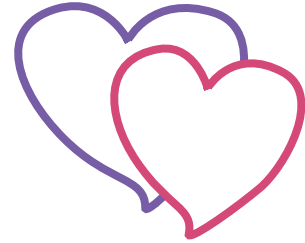


Daughters, think about it...

- * Have you talked about *sex* with your mom? This can be uncomfortable but if you have questions about *sex*, you should feel free to ask your mom. She can help explain what *sex* is and the values your family holds around *sex*. Do you know your cultural, religious or family values about *sex*? What do you think about *sex*?
- * Some cultures practice FGC to promote sexual chastity in women, however, there are other healthy and safe ways to wait to have *sex*. For some, sexual chastity is connected to your religion or tradition. Why do you think waiting to have *sex* is important?
- * How can your actions, the way you dress, and ways you communicate with male and female peers honor yourself, your culture, community, or your family?



Heart to Heart



Ask your Daughter

- ◆ Now that you are older, you will soon take a class at school on sex education. Have you heard anything about this class yet? Do you know what sex is? Do you have any questions about it?
- ◆ You might hear your friends talk about sex. What do you think about what they say?
- ◆ Do you know what our family and culture believe about sex before marriage? How do you think this is different from your friends or from U.S. culture?

Ask your Mom

- ◆ How is sex viewed in our culture? How does this compare to the U.S.? What are good things about both cultures we can adopt?
- ◆ How is romance in real life different from what we see in the movies?

Spending time together

What are some things we can do together? Some examples include:

Go for a walk

Cook our favorite meal

Go shopping

Read a book

Volunteer

Start a craft

I enjoy _____ with my mom because _____

I enjoy _____ with my daughter because _____

My favorite place to go with my mom is _____ because _____

The best thing about spending time together is _____

