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Doctors' Voice

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Talking to our kids about sex

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Today's young people live in a media driven world. They are exposed to sexualized images from a very young age (prime time TV, billboards.) Some of these images must be hard for young minds to make sense of. As they get older their social lives can involve large networks of social media friends. Important decisions can be influenced by 'peers' often not even known to parents. In the teen years there is a disturbingly high incidence of deliberate and accidental exposure to porn and texting/sexting is common. Schools are doing a good job keeping abreast of all this with most these days having sexual health and relationship programs- programs which help keep young people informed so that they can make good choices and be sexually safe. Parents also need to be informed. And they need to talk. In fact, *it's more important than ever that parents talk with their kids about healthy relationships and sex.*

Here are some tips for talking to your kids about sex (some are based on advice from W.A. experts)

1. Talk soon and often. Frequent little conversations are better (for both parents and child!) than the one scary 'talk' - which if short and sharp will likely focus on the negatives of sex.
2. Use correct names right from the start.. penis, vagina etc.
3. Talk about healthy relationships. respect, negotiating, listening.. and demonstrate them too.
4. Let your children know that a healthy sexual relationship is a very positive and pleasurable thing.
5. Try not to make sex a taboo subject in your family. Be available for sex talks.
6. Don't wait for questions. There are lots of prompts that can be used every day-TV, magazines, internet. "I don't think that's very respectful. What do you think?"
7. Listen as well as talk. Make it a discussion. Have lots of discussions.

8. Answer questions honestly. Be informed. Come back to a question if not sure. 'I'll check that out- I'm interested myself- and get back to you'.

9. The car's good for awkward conversations. But not every time you get in!

10. Don't assume heterosexuality. 10% population is same sex attracted. (Put a lid on derogatory same sex terms at home so that these are not taken to school).

11. Talk about condoms.

12. Have age appropriate books/ websites available eg 'Girl stuff' by Kaz Cooke is a good book to dip into.

13. Talk about the benefits of delaying first sex (no worry, relationship- and sex-likely to be much better if wait until older)

Free Gardasil® vaccination for boys ceases 31 December 2014

GARDASIL is the only human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine that helps protect against 4 types of HPV. In girls and young women ages 9 to 26, GARDASIL helps protect against 2 types of HPV that cause about 75% of cervical cancer cases, and 2 more types that cause about 90% of genital warts cases. In boys and young men ages 9 to 26, GARDASIL helps protect against approximately 90% of genital warts cases. Year 9 secondary school boys (aged 14 to 15 years) have until the end of 2014 to have the Gardasil® vaccine doses for free. The three dose course of vaccine is spaced at zero, two and six months.

From January 2015, Gardasil® vaccine is not a free vaccine for this age group. The Gardasil® vaccine will need to be purchased on prescription.

Doctors' Voice

Hay fever

Hay fever is the common name for a condition called allergic rhinitis, which means an allergy that affects the nose. Most people associate hay fever with spring, when airborne pollens from grasses are at their peak. However, hay fever can occur at any time of the year. This is known as perennial allergic rhinitis, which is usually caused by a reaction to allergens around the home, such as dust mites, moulds or animal hair or fur or occupational allergens.

Symptoms of hay fever include:

- sneezing
- a runny or stuffy nose
- itchy ears, nose and throat
- red, itchy or watery eyes
- headaches



In some cases, the symptoms of hay fever can be so severe that a person can't sleep or concentrate, and may feel tired or unwell.

Hay fever is an allergic reaction

Your nose acts as a filter. The tiny hairs and mucus that line the nasal passages trap dust, pollens and other microscopic particles. A person with hay fever is allergic to some of the particles that get trapped in the nose, such as pollen.

An allergic reaction means the immune system treats a harmless substance as if it is dangerous, and launches an 'attack'. The nasal passages become inflamed and more mucus is produced.

Reducing hay fever symptoms

Suggestions to prevent or limit symptoms of hay fever include:

- Check the pollen count forecast on television or in the newspaper. Try to stay indoors if it's a high count.
- Stay indoors as much as possible in spring, on windy days or after thunderstorms.
- In your garden, choose plants that are pollinated by birds or insects, rather than plants that release their seeds into the air.
- Replace your lawn with bricked or paved areas.
- Splash your eyes often with cold water to flush out any pollen.
- Reduce your exposure to dust and dust mites, animals and animal hair or fur (dander).

Treatment for hay fever

Some medications may help the symptoms of hay fever. Ask your doctor or pharmacist for advice.

Source: Better Health Channel www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au

Is there a link between Asthma and Hay fever?

Asthma and Hay fever are closely linked, and around 40% of Australians have some form of allergy, while more than 80% of people with asthma also have an allergy.

Research reveals that treating Hay fever can reduce asthma related emergency department visits and hospitalisations.

Managing asthma and allergy

Before you make any changes to your home or lifestyle, you should check if you really do have an allergy by seeing your doctor for allergy testing. If you do have an allergic response, you can talk with your doctor about how to manage the allergen. Your doctor may prescribe medication and advise how to reduce your exposure to your allergen triggers if appropriate. They may also update your [Asthma Action Plan](#).

Source: Asthma Australia

www.asthmaaustralia.org.au

