



**AUSTRALIA**  
It's time to "Get Comfy"

# HELP! My child is asking me questions that I feel don't comfortable answering.

Don't worry, you're not alone. Research shows that Aussie's aren't very comfortable discussing topics like sex and relationships with their kids. Act for Kids is here to hopefully help make your life as a parent or carer a little easier. The **Get Comfy** campaign encourages everyone to **Get Comfy** with discussing sex, bodies, consent and relationships with children.



Act for Kids commissioned its own research which asked people about their sex education, whether it was adequate and if they felt comfortable discussing sex, bodies and relationships with family members.

Incredibly, despite recent national conversation around the importance of learning consent, as a nation we still aren't comfortable having such conversations. Act for Kids research revealed that 55 per cent of people aren't comfortable talking to their parents, and 33 per cent of parents don't feel comfortable talking to their kids about sex.

Reflecting on their own sex education, 79 per cent of people said their sex education did not prepare them for real life experiences, and only 19 per cent of people learnt about consent. Unfortunately, one in five women and one in ten men felt pressured the first time they had sex.

We believe Australia needs a sex education review and that starts here with our team helping you.

## COMPREHENSIVE SEXUALITY EDUCATION

Approximately 50% of girls and 30% of boys aged 16-17 years have reportedly experienced some form of unwanted sexual behaviour towards them.

Warren, D. & Swami, N. (2019). Teenagers and Sex. In Longitudinal Study of Australian Children Annual Statistical Report (Chapter 5). Australian Institute of Family Studies).

A lack of information and misinformation about sex can affect a young person's ability to make informed, safe decisions. It is crucial children and young people receive comprehensive sex education so that they feel empowered to make healthy and safe decisions.

Research has shown that adolescents who received comprehensive sex education had a lower risk for pregnancy, and did not have increased sexual activity or start having sex earlier than those who received abstinence-only education or no sex education.

(Kohler, P.K., Manhart, L.E., & Lafferty, W.E. (2008). Abstinence only and comprehensive sex education and the initiation of sexual activity and teenage pregnancy. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 42, 344-351).

Comprehensive sexuality education addresses age-appropriate sexuality topics that affect children and young people's sexual growth and development using culturally-relevant, medically-accurate information such as:

- ♥ Body changes and puberty
- ♥ Menstruation
- ♥ Respectful behaviour and language
- ♥ Respectful relationships
- ♥ Privacy
- ♥ Safe sex
- ♥ Sexual decisions
- ♥ Sexual expression
- ♥ Contraception/birth control
- ♥ Masturbation
- ♥ Sexually transmitted infections (STIs)



## Start teaching consent from a young age

Consent should be taught from a young age. A child's brain starts developing emotional and social connections from birth. The early years are a crucial time to introduce an understanding of consent. Consent isn't just about saying no to sex, it's about knowing your rights and establishing personal safety boundaries.

**Example 1:** You can talk with your young child about safe touch versus unsafe touch during everyday activities like bath time.

**“We’re going to change your nappy now so that you’re clean.”**

Using simple language to explain what you're doing and why you're doing it can help your child understand why this form of touch is safe.

**Example 2:** We all know grandparents, Aunties and Uncles love a cuddle when they greet children, but sometimes children don't always want to hug them in return. Rather than forcing your child to give Grandma or Pop a hug when they don't want to, it's important to let them know that saying no is okay.

**“I can see you don't feel comfortable giving Grandma a hug today. That's okay, how about a high five instead?”** or **“That's okay, maybe later.”**

This teaches your child they are allowed to decide what happens to their body – they have the power to accept who touches them and what type of touch they feel comfortable with.



## TALKING TO YOUR CHILD ABOUT SEXUALITY EDUCATION

In many Australian schools sex education simply involves discussing anatomy, sexual organs, reproduction, periods and safe sex. However, there are still inconsistencies when it comes to teaching children about sex, bodies and relationships, with a lack of evidence-based education about consent, sexual preferences, online dating, sexting, and relationships.

The reality is many people are learning about sex by watching porn, which we now know can create unrealistic expectations and can leave people with a distorted understanding of sex. This is why it is critical to create a comfortable safe space for questions, to ensure your child is given the right tools ahead of their own experiences.

Here are some tips to help you talk with your child:

- ♥ Start conversations about sex, consent, relationships with your child from a young age.
- ♥ Keep conversations open and age appropriate.
- ♥ Use the correct words for body parts.
- ♥ Answer questions in a calm, casual manner.
- ♥ Ask your child what they already know so you can ensure they have the appropriate information.

- ♥ Don't make it awkward – it's important to remember if you don't talk to them they may get their information online or from an unsafe or unreliable source.
- ♥ Talk regularly, rather than having 'the chat'.
- ♥ Explain the importance of consent, especially in a sexual context – 'yes' means yes, 'no' means no, and 'maybe' means no.
- ♥ Cover a range of topics like sexting, sexual preferences, pleasure not just sex, puberty, pregnancy and safe sex practices.
- ♥ Seek resources if you're unsure about a topic.
- ♥ Remind your child they can always ask you questions and talk to you, or offer them the contact number for a safe resource (see our resource details on the next page).



## SEXUALITY EDUCATION RESOURCES

### For children needing support:

- ♥ Kids Helpline: **1800 551 800** or [www.kidshelpline.com.au](http://www.kidshelpline.com.au)
- ♥ Lifeline: **13 11 14** or [www.lifeline.org.au](http://www.lifeline.org.au)
- ♥ Beyond Bullying Project: [www.beyondbullyingproject.com](http://www.beyondbullyingproject.com)
- ♥ Family practitioners, health nurses and school guidance officers

### For parents and carers:

- ♥ State Governments' education websites are great place to find out what schools are teaching students, as well as teaching and learning resources such as: [www.qld.gov.au/families/education/sex](http://www.qld.gov.au/families/education/sex)
- ♥ Speak to your General Practitioner if you're worried
- ♥ SEA is a website designed purely to support parents and further help you to answer any tricky questions: [www.sexeducationaustralia.com.au/parents-4/](http://www.sexeducationaustralia.com.au/parents-4/)



Learn more at [actforkids.com.au](http://actforkids.com.au)

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