



Lots of Questions

Changing Bodies, Growing Up, Sex, Gender, and Sexual Health

Sometime between the ages of eight or nine and fifteen or so, kids' bodies begin to change and grow into adult bodies.

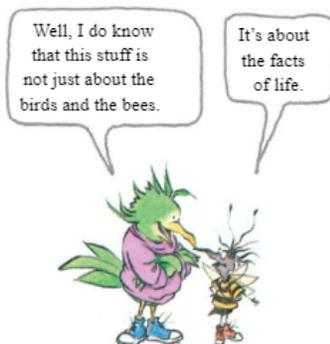


Most kids wonder about and have lots of questions about what will be happening to them as their bodies change and grow during this time.



It's perfectly normal for kids to be curious about and want to know about their changing

and growing bodies. Most of the changes—but not all—that take place during this time make it possible for humans to make a baby and give birth to a baby. And making a baby has a lot to do with sex.



Sex is about a lot of things—bodies, growing up, families, babies, love, caring, curiosity, feelings, respect, responsibility, biology, and health. There are times when sickness and danger can be a part of sex, too.

Most kids wonder about and have lots of questions about sex. It's also perfectly normal to want to know about sex.



You may wonder why it's a good idea to learn some facts about bodies, about growing up, about sex, about sexual health, and also about gender. It's important because these facts can help you stay healthy, take good care of yourself, and make good decisions about yourself as you are growing up and for the rest of your life.

Besides, learning about these things can be fascinating and fun.

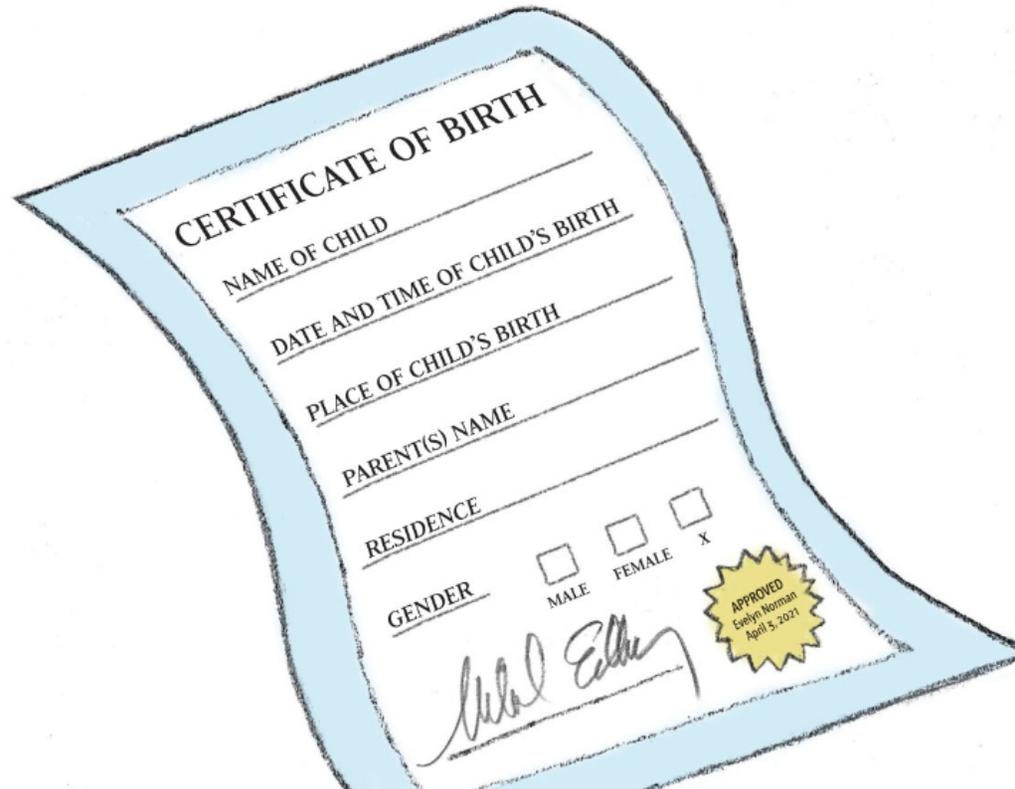




How you feel, see, and describe yourself— whether it is according to the sex you were assigned at birth or the gender you now feel and know you are — is called your gender identity. A person's gender identity is often defined by the clothes we wear, or by the way we behave, or by the way we look, or by other traits we may have.

Sometimes other people may try to define your gender for you. But who you are is most always the person you feel you are, or figure out you are, or already know you are, no matter what anyone else may say or think about you.

Gender is many things. That's why there is more than one answer to the question, What is gender?





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Strong Feelings Sexual Desire



The dictionary tells us even more about sex. It says,

4: Sexual desire.

Sex is also the desire to be physically close to someone, as close as you can be.

Do you ever really want or crave something? That's desire, like when you really want someone to be your best friend or when you really want chocolate ice cream.

You don't know why you want these things. You don't even think about why you want them. These are simply feelings of wanting — of desire.

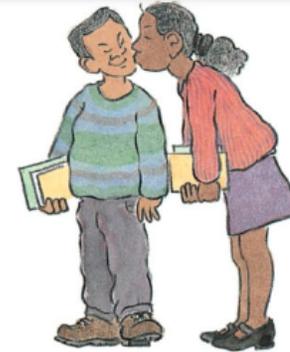
Sexual desire is different from these desires — different from just wanting chocolate ice cream, or wanting someone to be your best friend, or even wanting to snuggle up to your parent, a friend, a pet, or a stuffed animal.

Sexual desire means you feel attracted to someone in a very strong way . . . like being pulled by a magnet. You want to be as physically close to that person as you can be.

desire is mostly the way you feel in your body about that person. Your body may feel excited or warm or quivery or tingly. And sometimes these feelings can be very strong.

For lots of kids, sexual desire can happen when one has happy, nervous, or exciting feelings about another person — feelings that you may even feel inside your body. Often it's hard to stop thinking about that person and you may even think you are in love with that person. That's called "having a crush" on someone. Having crushes is perfectly normal. Not





The dictionary tells us one more thing about sex. It says,

5: Sexual intercourse.

Sex can also mean sexual intercourse. Some people call sexual intercourse “having sex.”



Most often, sexual intercourse happens when two people feel very sexy and very attracted to each other and may also have very loving and romantic feelings about each other. These feelings often make them want to or decide to be very close to each other in a sexual way. People can have these feelings for people of a different gender, or for people of the same gender, or for all genders.

One kind of sexual intercourse happens when a person with a female body and a person with a male body are so close to each other that the penis goes inside the vagina, and the vagina stretches in a

way that fits around the penis. This kind of touching can make the whole body feel good — feel sexy. And when this kind of sexual intercourse happens, it is possible for a female body and a male body — once their reproductive organs have grown up — to make a baby.



Most people don't have sexual intercourse only when



they want a baby. Most often, people have sexual intercourse because it feels good. People have sexual intercourse well into old age.

When a couple has sexual intercourse and does not want to make a baby, there are healthy ways, called birth control, that can help keep them from making a baby or from passing on an infection to one another.

Sometimes, a couple does not plan ahead or decide whether or not to have sexual intercourse. Planning ahead is most often the most effective way to keep a pregnancy from beginning.

People also call sexual intercourse “making love” or “lovemaking” because it’s a way of expressing love. But sexual intercourse is only one way of expressing love.

Another kind of sexual intercourse happens when the sexual parts of two people who have female bodies touch or when the sexual parts of two people who have male bodies touch. This kind of touching can make the whole body feel good — feel sexy. Since male bodies have only sperm cells and no egg cells — and since female bodies have only egg





cells and no sperm cells — the beginning cells of a baby cannot start to grow and a pregnancy cannot begin when two people of the same sex have sexual intercourse.

Hugging, cuddling, holding hands, kissing, and touching are other ways of expressing love. So is just being with someone you like a lot and telling that person, “I love you.”

There are some things about sex and sexual intercourse that are important to know and remember:

- It makes sense to wait to have sexual intercourse until you are old enough and responsible enough to make healthy decisions about sex.
- Every person, no matter what their gender or how young or old they are, has the right to say no to any kind of touching — even when one person is older, or a lot older, or stronger, or a lot stronger than the other person.
- A relationship that includes sexual contact often comes with exciting and good feelings. But sometimes, it may come with complicated feelings.
- Sexual intercourse — “having sex” — can involve the penis and the vagina, or the mouth

and the genitals, or the penis and the anus.

- After sexual intercourse that involves the vagina and the penis, a pregnancy can begin. But there are many ways a person can protect oneself from becoming pregnant and having a baby.
- During sexual intercourse, serious infections such as HPV, a virus that can cause some kinds of cancer, and HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, as well as other infections that are serious and others that are less serious, can be passed from one person to the other. Some are very hard to cure and others are easier to cure. However, there are ways in which people can help protect themselves from getting or passing on these infections.
- Not every person will want to or choose to have sexual intercourse. Some may be interested when they are older. Others may never be interested.

That's a lot to remember!

That's enough to remember.



So sex is a lot of things . . . even feelings . . . and thoughts.

Sex is the desire to be very close to someone.

Sex is touching the sexual parts of the body.

Sex is intercourse.

Sex is making babies.

Sex is the label most babies are given at birth depending on which sexual parts they were born with — female parts, or male parts, or a mixture of male and female parts.



Sometimes people use the word sexuality to talk about sex. When people use the word sexuality, they are usually talking about everything in our daily lives that makes us sexual human beings — our gender, our sexual feelings, thoughts, and desires, as well as any sexual contact, from sexual touching to sexual intercourse.



Cisgender is a word that has to do with gender. Cis is the Latin word for the phrase “on the same side.” A cisgender person is someone who feels or knows that the gender that was assigned to them at birth — female or male — was and still is their gender. The word cis is often used as a shorter way of saying the word cisgender. Cisgender people can be straight, or lesbian, or gay, or bisexual, or asexual.

Transgender is another word that has to do with gender.

Trans is the Latin word for across or the phrase on another side. A transgender person is someone whose gender identity is different from the gender that person was assigned at birth and who transitions from the gender assigned at birth to a different gender. Transgender people can be straight, or lesbian, or gay, or bisexual, or asexual.

This means that a person who was born with a male body, but feels, acts, and knows she is female and may ask to be

called a girl — or a person who was born with a female body, but feels, acts, and knows he is a male and may ask to be called a boy — is a transgender person. Some may feel this way all of the time and will feel this way throughout their lives. Others may feel this way for only a few months or a few years. And some may feel that sometimes they are one gender and other times they are a different gender.

Transgender people may change the way they dress or



Perfectly Normal Masturbation

During puberty, when the sex hormones cause kids' sex organs to become more active, many kids begin to have even more pleasurable and excited feelings about their own bodies than they have ever had before. They may also be more attracted to and interested in other people's bodies.

These feelings are often called sexual feelings or "feeling sexy." Even though they are hard to describe, they are normal feelings. They happen at different times and in different ways for different kids.

Kids, teenagers, and grown-ups too experience sexy feelings when they masturbate. Masturbation is touching or rubbing any of your body's sex organs for pleasure—because it feels good. One everyday term people young and old often use for masturbating is "playing with yourself."



Some people think that masturbation is wrong or harmful. And some religions call masturbation a sin. But masturbating cannot hurt you. And it does not result in pregnancy or in getting or passing on infections that are spread through sexual contact.

Many people masturbate. Many don't. Whether you

masturbate or not is your choice. Masturbating is perfectly normal.

When people masturbate, they usually rub their sex organs with their hands or with something soft, like a pillow.

Girls often rub their clitoris; boys often rub their penis. Both the clitoris and the penis are sensitive to touch.





to sexual intercourse—at any time and for any reason.

Sexual intercourse usually begins with two people touching, caressing, kissing, and hugging each other.

After a bit, a person's vagina becomes moist and slippery, and the clitoris becomes hard. After a bit, a person's penis becomes erect, stiff, and larger. Sometimes a bit of clear fluid that may contain a few sperm comes out of the tip of the penis and makes it wet. This is usually when two people begin to feel excited about each other.

But in fact, there are different kinds of sexual intercourse — vaginal intercourse, oral intercourse, and anal intercourse.

When a person with a female body and a person with a male body are having vaginal intercourse, the erect penis goes into and inside the vagina, which stretches in a way that fits around the penis. The wetness from the vagina makes it easier for the penis to go into the vagina.

Vaginal intercourse is also called vaginal sex. As the two people move back and forth in rhythm, the movement of the penis inside the vagina soon feels very good. They may hug