

# Talking to Your Child About Their Body Parts



Talking to your child about their body is important. Below are some tips to help prepare you for this conversation. Use this information to prepare yourself and help children understand how their body works and how to keep it safe.

## Start the Conversation

### You might want to say something like:

*Private parts are sometimes parts of our body that bathing suits cover. You get to give permission for anyone to touch your body. For example, when a family member is visiting, you can choose to give them a hug, a wave, or a high-five to say hello.*

When discussing private parts, some resources talk about "girl" and "boy" body parts. This is not affirming of gender diverse people. Use developmentally appropriate language to explain to youth that some children are non-binary, some are transgender, some are boys, some are girls, and some identify their gender in other ways.

Talking about body parts is also related to talking about consent. Your child has a choice in who touches them and where, even on body parts that many bathing suits do not cover.

## Teach your child to use the doctors' names for body parts.

### You might want to say something like:

*Private parts are different on different children. I want to make sure you know the doctors' names for these body parts. Some babies are born with a vagina, some are born with a penis. Some babies are born with a combination of these parts\*. For some people, the parts covered by their bathing suit is considered private.*

Using medically accurate terminology is a critical component to talking with your child about their bodies and sexual development. It is important to use identifiable and accurate terms so that your child is immediately understood when referring to their private parts.

\*Intersex is an umbrella term to describe a wide range of natural body variations of sex. Intersex variations may include, but are not limited to, variations in chromosome compositions, hormone concentrations, and external and internal characteristics. For more information on common gender, sexuality, and identity terms, check out the [LGBTQ+ Glossary of Terms](#).

## Talk about who is allowed to touch private body parts

### You might want to say something like:

*Your body is very, very special, and your body is just yours. The important thing about your body is that it belongs to you. You can touch your private parts, because they are yours, but no one else can touch your body, unless you say it is okay.*

When talking to your child about their bodies, it is important that they know who is allowed to touch their private parts and who is not allowed. Continue to practice using the medical terms for private parts with your child and explain that parents touch children's body parts to help take care of them and keep them clean, and a doctor or nurse may examine private parts in a medical office.

## Tips to practice:

Be prepared! Help yourself feel more comfortable by making sure that you have all of your materials gathered before beginning to talk with your child.

- Get ready by reading and using this handout or by drawing your own body shape outlines on a blank piece of paper. Make sure to have some markers or crayons handy for your child.
- Make sure that you are familiar with the many parts of a body and what they are used for. For example, ears help us hear, eyes help us to see, a vagina or penis help us to pee or urinate and get rid of things our body no longer needs.
- Getting comfortable saying the words for private parts is helpful. Before beginning the conversation with your child, spend some time practicing what you would like to say and get used to saying "penis", "vagina", "chest", and "buttocks" or "anus", so that you are cool and calm when teaching your child these terms. Practice saying these words in front of a mirror so that you can monitor your expressions.

## Keep trying!

Just like you, children to practice using the medical terms for body parts to increase their comfort level. As children grow and understand their body in different ways, they may develop questions. Let your child know that they can come talk to you anytime they have questions about their body. If they don't bring it up, you bring it up! Keep checking in with your child about their body and body safety as your child grows and matures.

Using the figures below, practice drawing the anatomical private parts: penis, testicles, vagina, chest, nipples, buttocks or butt, anus.

While you are drawing, practice saying the names for each private part. Have your child repeat the terms several times until you are sure they understand. Now that you have talked about the names of the body parts, draw a bathing suit or clothing to cover the private areas.



