



Human Reproduction

It is important for individuals with and without disabilities to understand human reproduction—how babies are made. You can decide when the time is right, but it should be before they reach puberty or begin sexual activity. You will want to make sure that they hear accurate information from you. Depending on their age, they may also receive some of this information in their school family life education or health class, and you will want to be available to answer any additional questions they may have.

WHAT MY CHILD NEEDS TO KNOW

1. Males and females have different reproductive systems. A female's ovaries produce eggs at a certain time each month. These eggs are released from the female's body during monthly menstruation, and then the cycle starts over.
2. A male body produces sperm. A baby can be conceived when an egg cell is fertilized with a sperm cell. Both cells are needed to make a baby.
3. An egg can be fertilized when a female and male are having sex during the time the female is ovulating (usually 10-16 days before a menstrual period). If the sperm fertilizes the egg, the female will become pregnant.



TIPS FOR TEACHING YOUR CHILD ABOUT HUMAN REPRODUCTION

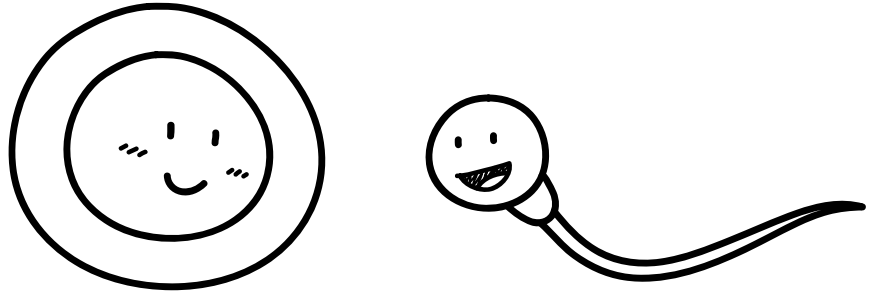
1. Base your discussion on your child's age and developmental level. A 5-year-old who asks where babies come from needs a simpler explanation than a 13-year-old who asks the same question.
2. Use accurate words and descriptions when describing the human body, sex, intimacy, and reproduction. For example, your child may think that babies grow in a mommy's tummy. Let them know that while it does look like that, a baby actually grows in a part of the mommy's body called a uterus.
3. Many books with pictures, videos, illustrations, etc., have good information on the human reproduction process, including conception, embryo and fetal development, and the birth process. Using these types of visual supports can make the conversations easier and will leave your child with something to look at later.

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What my child needs to know continued...

4. Some females, especially teenagers, do not have regular menstrual or ovulation cycles. A person can get pregnant during menstruation and at any time when sperm is in contact with an egg. This can happen with sexual activities other than intercourse (penis-in-vagina). Pregnancy can occur the first time a person has sex. To avoid pregnancy, use protection such as condoms or birth control. Both sexual partners are responsible for protection.
5. A baby starts out as an embryo and becomes a fetus at about 10-11 weeks. It can also be called a baby at this point. The fetus grows inside the female's uterus for an average of 40 weeks until it is born.

Tips for teaching your child about human reproduction continued...

4. You can also develop social stories to describe the human reproductive process more simply to younger children or those with cognitive delays.
5. Your values are a key part of the information you convey. Every family has different values and will determine when the right time is to share what information. Remember, some of these things may make you uncomfortable, but children need honest and true answers. You want them to know they can come to you.

