

GOING THROUGH **PUBERTY** TOGETHER

A GUIDE FOR
PARENTS

on sexual development in
adolescence



Bundesinstitut für
Öffentliche Gesundheit

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Publisher: Federal Institute of Public Health (BIÖG)
Maarweg 149–161, 50825 Cologne, Germany
www.bioeg.de
Acting Head: Dr. Johannes Nießen

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Editorial office: BIÖG
Design: BOK + Gärtner GmbH, Münster
Cover image: Oliver Rossi/Stone via Getty Images

Edition: 1.bf.11.25
Item number: 13660400
Ordering address: BIÖG, 50819 Cologne
by fax: 0221/8992-257
by email: bestellung@bioeg.de

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INTRODUCTION

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT

If you occasionally ask yourself how you can support your child during the development of their sensual faculties and sexuality during puberty, this brochure may be helpful to you.

The brochure explains the psychological and physical changes and challenges associated with puberty. It also deals with possible uncertainties, questions and disputes within the family. You will learn how you as parents can talk to your child about topics such as relationships, sexuality, fertility, gender issues and contraception and explain these to them.

Depending on what you are particularly interested in, you can skip to the relevant chapter.

It may be strange for you to talk to your child about these topics because you have grown up very differently yourself. If so, it may help you to know that you as parents can contribute to your child being able to lead a self-determined life in terms of their sexuality and relationships later on. Holistic sex education in this sense also contributes greatly to the prevention of sexualized violence. It supports children and young people in their ability to communicate and act. For example, informed children find it easier to turn to trusted persons for help.

SEXUALITY DEVELOPS FROM BIRTH

Sexuality is a basic human need and is expressed from birth. The essential foundations of gender identity, body perception and the ability to bond and relate are laid in childhood. These foundations are important for experiencing sexuality in adulthood.

However, sexuality does not develop in a linear fashion. It is closely linked to physical and psychological development processes. Just as children learn to move around from birth, early childhood sexuality also develops from an early age. This development can be divided into different phases.

It is obvious when it comes to locomotion: The child starts by crawling, then learns to walk and run. Many children then race around on their balance bikes, and then move on to scooters or bicycles.

When it comes to sexuality, the individual developmental phases are not so clearly distinguishable. But sexuality is also learned and develops over the entire lifespan. In this process, puberty is the transitional phase in which the child develops into an adult.

EVERY PERSON'S DEVELOPMENT IS UNIQUE

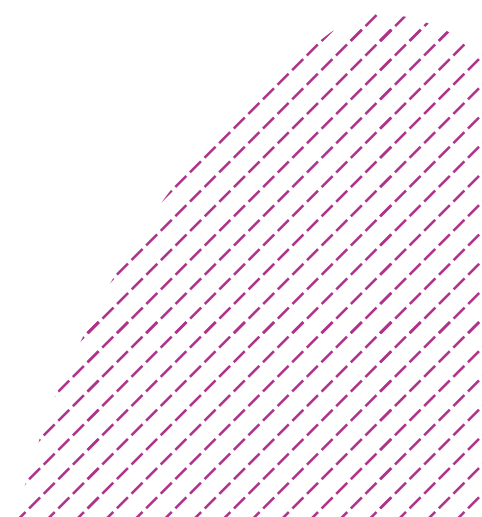
Every young person develops at their own pace – both physically and mentally.

One thing is clear: Even from birth, physical closeness and engagement with one's own body are important for finding one's way in the world.

Many factors influence a child's development and help determine their path in life. For example, the child is shaped by their environment, the size and cultural background of the family or whether they grow up in the city or in a rural area.

Their very personal inner starting conditions also play a role: Were they born prematurely? Do they have any restrictive allergies? Do they have any physical or mental disabilities? What innate talents do they have? Did they learn to walk or talk earlier or later?

One thing is clear: There is no fixed standard or normality. Every child has a right to their own personal development and every child is fine the way they are.





WELCOME TO PUBERTY

THREE PHASES WE ALL GO THROUGH

I'm sure you can still remember puberty. Perhaps because of the physical changes. Maybe because you rebelled against your parents, because you felt so uncomfortable in your own skin, because everything wasn't so bad, because you "messed up"... To understand your child, it can help if you think about your own puberty: Perhaps you remember something that helped you during this time or something you would have liked your parents to have done.

PRE-PUBERTY

Most children start pre-puberty towards the end of primary school. It lasts for a period of about two to three years. It's not just the children who are now in a state of flux, but also the relationship between children and their parents. Perhaps your child is questioning family rules. Children in this stage often want to decide for themselves how they look, what they wear and how they spend their free time. Under no circumstances do they want to be treated like a little kid. They now retreat to their room more often and want to be left alone. At the same time, they want to be close to their family and still be allowed to be children.

The body is maturing, new neural pathways are created in the brain and the hormones shift into gear. These hormones trigger the next stages of development. Your child will now also increasingly begin to look for role models outside the family and follow their example. In the process, they also develop and consolidate their personality. Sometimes the role models change very quickly. What was completely right or trendy yesterday may appear in a different light tomorrow. Your child is trying things out and wants to become more independent. Even if it may be painful for you, it's good for the children to get their bearings outside the home. For you as parents, it is now a question of striking a balance between giving your child freedom on the one hand and protecting your child on the other. In this way, they can learn first what it means to "have a say" in order to later "decide for themselves."

PARENT QUOTE

"A doctor friend of mine once told me that I have to imagine puberty like this: Someone reaches into your head and rips out all the 'wires' that were previously connected. And then everything has to be rewired from scratch. Since then, I have developed more understanding for my child."

PUBERTY

In the following peak phase of puberty, between the ages of twelve and sixteen, physical, emotional and sexual development really takes off. Young people become sexually mature and their primary and secondary sexual characteristics develop. Among other things, hair grows where there was none before, the shoulders and pelvis become broader, the voice deeper and breasts and testicles become larger.

Children often find much of what their parents do or say quite embarrassing in this phase. Many young people no longer want to be seen naked, even within the family. You should definitely respect that. During this time, many teenagers have their first experiences with kissing and petting, and some even have sexual intercourse. By the age of 16, 35% of young people in Germany have already had sexual intercourse (source: Youth Sexuality Study 2019).

On the one hand, the opinion of their peers is becoming increasingly important, but on the other hand, what their parents think remains very important. Even if parents sometimes find it hard to believe, teenagers are not indifferent to what their parents think about their current girlfriend or boyfriend, for example, what they think of their current relationship, what they think about homosexuality and transgender and what they have to say about sex and contraception. This is also when the discussions about when they should come home or the possibility of the girlfriend or boyfriend staying over for the night begin. And it's time to talk about contraception too.

In this phase of puberty, your child is searching for their own identity. It's about big questions: Who am I really? What do I want to be like one day? Where is my place in the world? What do I think about social and/or political issues? But also: Who will I fall in love with? Do I feel masculine? Do I feel feminine? What does that even mean for me? Do I feel comfortable in my role as a girl or a boy? Relationships are changing. It is a phase of negotiation and discussion among friends and family, and sometimes there are arguments at home. These are about respect and media use, school and going out, helping around the house and pocket money.

While you may experience your child as withdrawn and argumentative, during puberty, they too may feel that you are constantly nagging them and have “no idea what’s going on.” As an adult, you should therefore try to keep a cool head even after potentially heated arguments, seek out contact to your child and keep the conversation going.

Your child wants to be more independent. As parents, you must learn to assess how much responsibility you can already hand over and where you should still support your child.

LATE PUBERTY

From around the age of sixteen, the situation eases again in most families. The battles have been fought and the young people have settled into being young adults. From now on, the process of negotiating is far less stressful. Some points of view have been clarified and parents and young people have adjusted to the changes. Many parents now also accept that their child is beginning to actively explore their sexuality. You can help your child to do this while behaving responsibly for themselves and others. But of course there may still be differences of opinion.

Puberty is a time of change for both sides: Children have to detach themselves from their parents and parents from their children. This works best if they do not lose contact with each other. If that doesn’t work so well by talking, then perhaps by doing things together. Of course, your children are more likely to want to participate if they can have a say and help plan the project. At the same time, they learn that they can shape and achieve something themselves.

“From cradle to the grave, we all need a secure base,” says attachment researcher John Bowlby. What he meant by this is that if children know that they always have a safe place at home, they can go out into the world.

There are also children and young people to whom the general “wisdom” hardly applies or who have different individual requirements, for example, children and young people with a disability or highly gifted children. Of course, these children are just as “normal” as everyone else and should be treated as such. At the same time, it helps them if they are accompanied and supported by their parents with regard to their personal requirements.

Gifted children, for example, are often far ahead of their peers in terms of learning and should be encouraged and challenged accordingly at school. However, this “head start” should not automatically be transferred to other areas of life. Especially in social interaction, the opposite can be the case and gifted children sometimes need special activities and attention.

Children and adolescents with a cognitive disability also often need special support. With a few exceptions, their physical and sexual development is “age-appropriate.” The emotional and intellectual development of children and adolescents with cognitive disabilities, on the other hand, is sometimes slower and not as fluid as that of children and young people without disabilities. This can mean, for example, that they show “typical” behaviors, such as playing doctors or the famous “why” questions, later than others.

Each form and manifestation requires appropriate guidance and corresponding support. These can also be brochures in simplified language.

This is where you as parents are often particularly challenged. Remember: You cannot and should not do everything on your own. Get help and support in good time, for example from specialist advice centers. You and your child have a right to it! A corresponding overview can be found in the notes of this brochure.

INTERACTING RESPECTFULLY WITH ONE ANOTHER

RESPECT IS BASED ON RECIPROCITY

Respect within the family is the basis for a trusting relationship. Parents can be role models by treating each other and their children with respect. They can also say “stop” to their children if they use abusive language, for example. “We can talk about anything, but not like this” is a helpful phrase.

ALLOWING DISTANCE... IS IMPORTANT FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF PERSONALITY

Even if you find it difficult to give your child this trust, you must gradually let go so that they can have their own experiences. They need to find out for themselves what is important and what is less so, what role models they have, how diverse they are and which of them are helpful, useful or worth following. Of course you are one of them. Your child will learn from you as a role model, they will measure themselves against you and compare themselves to you, and they will also sometimes rub you the wrong way.

AT THE SAME TIME...

...your child still needs your support. Perhaps they are experiencing something unpleasant or have “messed up” or need some advice that you can give them. What won't help your child are comments like: “That's exactly what I told you would happen.” Give your child the security of knowing that you will stand by their side even if they have not listened to your advice or even done something you have explicitly told them not to do.

If there is mutual trust, your child knows that they can always come to you with questions or concerns. Even if they have done something wrong. And especially if they have experienced something upsetting. This is better than your child keeping a secret out of shame and a guilty conscience. Dealing with a tricky situation together, resolving or overcoming such a moment together – that's what sticks with you your entire life. This teaches your child how to cope with difficult situations. Let your child know that they can come to you in any situation and that you are there for them.

DON'T TAKE IT PERSONALLY

Sometimes adolescents need to lean in and seek closeness to their parents, other times they are defiant and reject all friendly offers of conversation. “Don't take it personally” is the most important and at the same time the most difficult parenting principle. This helps to make it clear that the children are trying things out, in the best case on their parents. Sometimes it is enough to simply wait until the children seek you out of their own accord. At the same time, it is important that you approach your child on your own initiative and show an interest in talking to them. Sons in particular want their fathers to approach them more often and listen to them (source: Youth Sexuality Study 2019)

RESPECT FOR PRIVACY

A rollercoaster of emotions begins with puberty. The body develops and opens up a range of emotions from pride to shame. And the question often arises: Am I normal?

For you as parents, it is now important to take your child's desire for privacy seriously. Conflicts can arise, for example, when the bathroom door is locked for longer and longer because your child is taking a long shower, bathing or getting ready. Many teenagers also often don't want their parents to enter their room without them asking first.

With a little understanding, rules can be found for these situations and drawn up together: for example, by letting parents know in advance that the room will be locked, or by putting up a door sign to indicate they don't want to be disturbed. If you haven't already done so, get into the habit of knocking and waiting for a “yes” before entering the child's room. This prevents unnecessary arguments and strengthens respect for one another.



TALKING ABOUT SEX – BUT HOW?

“CAN WE TALK?”

It's not always that easy: Most people don't find it as easy to talk about sex as they do about a broken leg or a soccer match, and that's quite normal. At the same time, both parents and children need words to talk about it. It is helpful for children and adolescents to have a person in their life who can also help them with intimate and sexual issues.

"Humor can help. Sometimes a joke breaks the ice, but it mustn't be too embarrassing either."

PARENT QUOTE

THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS THE "ONE" TALK

There is no one big "the talk," but a series of small occasions that you as parents can pick up on when you notice that your child is preoccupied with something.

Parents do not have to be able to talk about sex in a completely relaxed and perfect way. You are allowed to struggle. Don't force yourself to do something that doesn't suit you. Your child will notice this anyway. Perhaps together you can find other ways to approach the topics surrounding sex, for example via age-appropriate and development-appropriate brochures, websites or social media. When it comes to the conversation itself, it helps to keep in mind that it's easier to talk to each other in a relaxed atmosphere.



TALKING NEEDS RULES

Create an atmosphere together with your child in which everyone feels comfortable. This, of course, includes things like:

- # Listening to each other and showing an interest.
- # Taking what the other person says seriously.
- # Respecting the boundaries of the other person.
- # Practicing telling each other when something nice, funny or sad has happened.

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO GET ACROSS TO THEM?

The topic of "sexuality" is also about relationships and friendship. A conversation about this could be a door opener (e.g. "if you have a girlfriend or boyfriend..."). Depending on what seems important to you at the time or what the teen is particularly interested in, you can also offer to talk about contraception, love, sexual and gender diversity, etc. Relationship issues and falling in love are of course also discussed at school and among their peers, often even more than in conversation with you. You need to accept the fact that your child's friends and their opinions are becoming increasingly more central in their lives. Continue to signal that you are willing to talk and that your child can always ask you questions.

Trying to understand how the other person feels and not judging them too quickly.

Laughing together can be very liberating.

Use media, for example books – a picture is sometimes worth a thousand words – or perhaps interesting websites for young people such as www.loveline.de the youth portal on sex topics from the Federal Institute of Public Health (BIOG).

PARENT QUOTE

"It helped me a lot to simply put myself in my child's shoes. I suddenly understood more."

STARTING A CONVERSATION TOGETHER

WHAT WAS IT LIKE FOR YOU?

Before you start talking to your child, it can be helpful to ask yourself a few questions: What were my first experiences of sexuality like? Did my parents talk to me about sex – and if so, how? And: What helped me? What would I have needed? Think for yourself: What is important to me? What do I want to teach my child? What would I like to give them? Which parent is the right person to talk to or is it both? This can vary depending on the topic.



TOGETHER ON THE SEARCH

Why not research together to find the answers to your child's questions or the topics and terms relating to sex education online.



THE TALK – MORE THAN JUST TALKING

There is no such thing as THE one TALK and THE right time. Sex education is an ongoing process. There is always a need to talk about something, as your child's current interests and questions change. It is a good idea to have the conversation in the moment when questions arise.

When your child asks questions, it is a great sign of trust, and a bravely asked question deserves an honest answer. It can be helpful to ask yourself a few questions: What would I have wished for back then? What would have helped me back then?

SEE IT THROUGH YOUR CHILD'S EYES

Your child may not be so keen to talk to you about sex. Accept this and, at the same time, communicate the simple message that: "If you want, you can talk to me at any time."

If your child is open and curious and communicates that they want to know more about sex, you can easily use this to start a conversation.

Of course, you can also talk about things that are important to you or where you realize that it would be a good idea to talk about them, for example while you're on a day-trip or a stroll through town together. If you notice that this makes your child uncomfortable, do not pursue the issue further in this situation. A good mixture of seeking contact and "leave them be" can be very helpful here.

"There's nothing you can't talk about. But the crucial factor is what interests my child."

PARENT QUOTE

ENCOURAGE YOUR CHILD TO SPEAK UP ABOUT THINGS

Help your child to learn how to express themselves so that they are able to find words for the situation they are experiencing. Expressing needs, voicing uncertainties, being able to formulate questions and wishes clearly – these are all important things that will help your child now and later. In this way, they learn: “I can talk about that. There are words for what I’m feeling. And I am not judged or condemned for voicing it.”



ALLOW UNCERTAINTY

You may also not always know what is right, how you should address something and whether your tone comes across correctly for your child. And some of your child’s questions may leave you lost for words. Show your uncertainty, perhaps even your ignorance. This has nothing to do with failure, but rather opens up the opportunity to think together and look for the answer. And remember: There is always another chance to get it right.

HAVE COURAGE

You are not an all-knowing encyclopedia, but you are also not your child’s best friend. Allow yourself the moment to think how and when it suits you best to talk about sex. At the same time, remain sensitive when your child asks you questions.

However, it may also be easier for you not to wait for the moment of the conversation to spontaneously present itself, but to plan it and incorporate it into your daily routine. This may help you to better prepare for the conversation or even obtain suitable media. You can also plan this with your child and invite them to have the conversation. Sometimes it helps to use shared rituals to talk about personal things, on a walk or while cooking, for instance.

PARENT QUOTE

“There’s nothing you can’t talk about. But the crucial factor is what interests my child.”

A GOOD CULTURE OF DISPUTE

Arguing calmly with each other

Conflicts do not have to be avoided; they have to be dealt with. Allow yourself and your child the right to express your or their own wishes and needs and to negotiate the rules of coexistence together. Of course, there are also legal framework conditions that apply and must be observed by the parents and accepted by the children, such as the parents' duty of care or liability for the child. To find a solution together, it is crucial that you take your child's concerns seriously and listen to each other. Only argue about specific things and not about the principle. Don't let yourself be guided too much by spontaneous feelings; instead, make use of objective arguments.

Stay credible

Speak as directly as possible about what is bothering you and make it clear where your anger or fear is coming from. It is helpful if you name your feelings clearly, for example: "I'm worried about you and I'm afraid that..." or "I was quite annoyed about the mess because it's important to me in the household that..."

Criticize the issue, not the person

In the event of a dispute, try to only criticize the issue, not the person. For example, if your child does not do their homework, then criticize this fact. In this case, for example, don't say "you're lazy," but rather "You're not sticking to our agreement." In the heat of the moment, it is sometimes difficult to separate the two. But statements about the person also offend your child as a whole person. Even when they have made a mistake, teenagers need to know that they are loved, accepted and respected by their parents.

Set appropriate boundaries

When parents get stuck in a conflict, they sometimes get carried away and make excessive threats of punishment: "If you do that, then..." This puts you as a parent unnecessarily in a corner and is often unrealistic, as punishments should always be appropriate and proportionate to the offense. However, this is often difficult to implement fairly. In addition, your child can then only learn what they are not allowed to do. It is better to develop rules together that apply to everyone. If young people feel patronized and unfairly punished, they will refuse to participate and will not be able to learn anything from it.

Take some time out

Have you been talking yourself into a rage in an argument? It can then be helpful for everyone involved to break off the conversation. Consciously take a time-out for yourselves and only come back to discuss the contentious points once everyone has calmed down. Arrange to talk about it later.





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YOUR CHILD'S BODY IS CHANGING

Exactly when the first signs of physical changes of puberty become noticeable varies from child to child. Puberty usually begins between the ages of 10 and 14.

Most children can be clearly categorized physically as male or female. Some children have characteristics of both sexes. This is called intersex. Accordingly, the body continues to develop as female, male or intersex during puberty. You can find more information on intersex in chapter 3 on the topic of gender diversity (page 38).

For a basic orientation on physical development during puberty, the development of the female and male body is first explained here. The developments described here vary from child to child. And this applies to all genders.

To understand your child, it helps to know what is going on in their body. With this knowledge, you can also help your child to deal positively with the changes brought about by puberty.



WHAT HAPPENS IN THE FEMALE BODY

With the onset of puberty, the ovaries increase the production of sex hormones. Externally, isolated pubic hairs now begin to grow in the upper part of the genital area, the mons veneris, and on the darker-colored outer vulval lips (labia). The tissue on the breasts starts to bulge out a little and the breast buds develop. The areola darkens, becomes larger and only later does the nipple emerge clearly. The growth process of the breasts is often accompanied by tingling and a painful pulling sensation and sometimes one breast grows slightly faster than the other. That is quite normal.

WHEN GROWTH GETS A BOOST

Around one to two years after the first signs of puberty, a significant growth spurt sets in: The pelvis usually becomes wider and the thighs rounder, while the shoulders remain rather narrow. Armpit hair only grows relatively late in the course of puberty.

Increased sebum production can lead to greasy hair, spots and sometimes acne. Acne in pubescent teens should not be treated with commercially available creams; it should be treated professionally, for example by a dermatologist.

Before and during the general growth spurt, the vagina enlarges, and the uterus gradually takes on its typical pear shape. Around six months to a year before the first menstruation, a glassy-white vaginal discharge occurs.

If no typical signs of puberty such as a growth spurt or the onset of intimate hair growth are visible at the age of 13 or 14, you should take your child to see a doctor. They can clarify whether a hormonal disorder may be present.

MENSTRUATION: FEELING FINE DURING A PERIOD

WHEN MENSTRUATION (PERIOD) BEGINS

Many girls often await their first menstruation with a mixture of impatience, uncertainty and anticipation. Those girls who are well prepared for menstruation are best able to get comfortable with the idea. But when blood actually starts flowing out of the vagina for the first time, it is a new and unfamiliar situation, even for well-prepared girls, before they realize with relief or joy: "I just got my first period!"

If your child is happy about having passed this rite of passage, you can even celebrate their first menstruation with a special activity together. In this way, you can show your child that they can be proud of this developmental step and that it is something positive.

TALKING ABOUT MENSTRUATION

It is helpful if parents address the topic of menstruation in good time. Sometimes a conversation arises all by itself. If teenagers know that there are family members' pads or tampons in the bathroom at home, you're already off to a good start – menstruation is not something that needs to be kept secret. Use small occasions or questions from your child to explain how and when menstruation can start.

However, talking alone is not always enough. Books or other media can help to find words and explain topics. Offers in simplified language or in the respective mother tongue can also be useful. Especially for children with a mental disability or if the physical changes start very early, descriptive brochures can help to ensure that menstruation is perceived as a positive developmental step.

"When I think about how I experienced my first period back then... rather anxious... My daughter should be able to experience it as much more normal."

PARENT QUOTE

On the subject of menstruation, the brochure "Aufregende Jahre – Jules Tagebuch" (Exciting years – Jules' diary) or "SEX & TIPPS – Mädchenfragen" (SEX & TIPS – Girls' questions) could also be an interesting reading recommendation for your child (see notes).

THE FIRST MENSTRUATION

The first menstrual bleed is also called menarche. For some it starts earlier, for others later. This is normal. The onset of menstruation is also the first time many female adolescents visit a gynecologist for the first time. Another step into adult life.

Discomfort may occur during menstruation. Talk to your child about this without unsettling them. Complaints may include: headaches, nausea and back pain as well as a pulling sensation and even abdominal pain. If the symptoms become more severe and more frequent or if the teenager is seriously worried that something might be wrong with her body, a visit to the gynecologist is definitely recommended. The doctor can also clarify whether severe abdominal pain that occurs repeatedly is caused by endometriosis.

You can find more information on endometriosis in the notes and at www.loveline.de/themen/maedchen/alles-in-ordnung/endometriose

The more naturally you deal with the topic of menstruation yourself, the easier it will be for your child. Important to know: Your child can become pregnant even before the first menstruation. Talk openly with your child about this so that they learn to be responsible with their sexuality.

PAD, TAMPON, MENSTRUAL UNDERWEAR OR...?

Finding and using the right sanitary products takes a little time and practice. Be available to answer your child's questions. At the same time, remember that the decision for or against a particular method ultimately lies entirely with the child. Even though you may think that tampons are the most practical, many young girls prefer to use pads or other sanitary products. Many young girls initially find it strange to insert a foreign body into the vagina. There are other hygiene products such as menstrual sponges, menstrual cups and menstrual underwear. But these also need practice to use them.

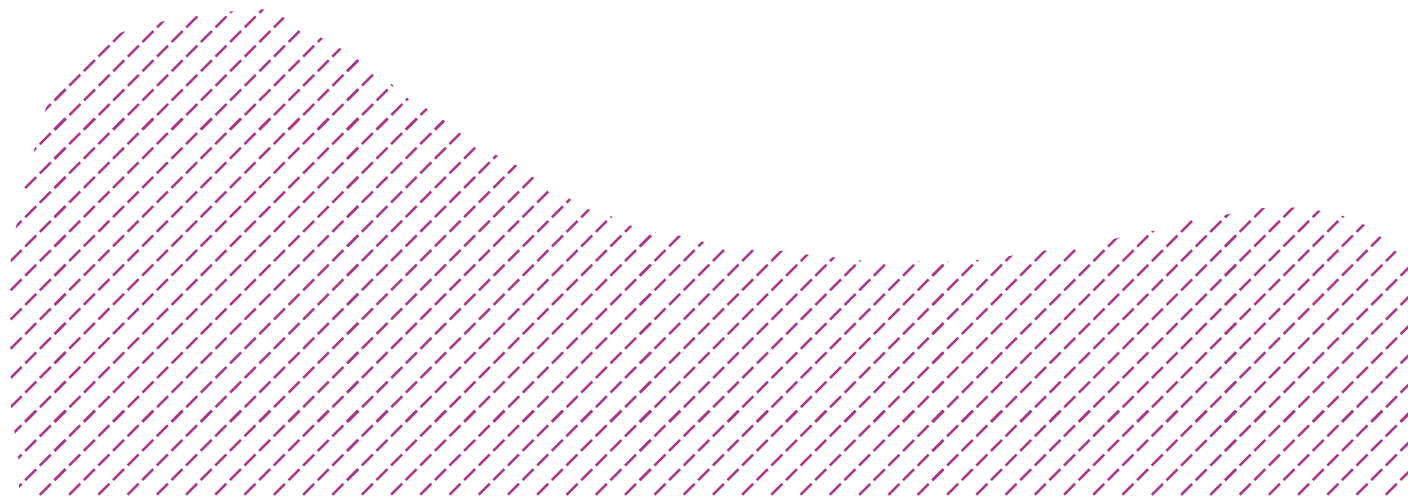
Some girls wonder whether the hymen can be damaged by the tampon. You can allay your child's concerns by explaining what the hymen actually is. Many people think it is like a kind of closure of the vagina. But that is not the case. The hymen is a soft, stretchy seam at the entrance to the vagina. It can have different shapes and forms. It can cover the entrance to the vagina slightly but does not close it. During the first sexual intercourse, the hymen may tear and then bleed a little. However, this only happens very rarely because it is very elastic. It then heals quickly on its own. The appearance of the hymen can therefore very rarely be used to determine whether an adolescent or a woman has already had sexual intercourse or not. It is not possible for it to tear through the use of tampons or menstrual cups.



FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT THE MENSTRUAL CYCLE AND MENSTRUATION

There are many books and comics written for young people on this topic – also in different languages and in simplified language. These are suitable for learning more about the menstrual cycle and menstruation.

One example is the brochure “Aufregende Jahre – Jules Tagebuch” (Exciting years – Jules' diary). Parents and children alike can obtain information here. In the notes you will find the address from which it can be ordered free of charge.



WHAT HAPPENS IN THE MALE BODY

At the beginning of puberty in boys, the testicles are stimulated to produce more sex hormones. This triggers the growth of the internal and external sex organs.

First, the testicles grow larger and the scrotum becomes darker in color. A little later, the first pubic hairs start to grow around the base of the penis. During the growth spurt that follows, it is not just the penis that becomes longer and thicker. The sex glands also mature inside the body, especially the prostate and vesicle glands. These produce by far the largest proportion of sperm secretions, i.e. the fluid in which the sperm "swim." The sex glands are therefore very important for ejaculation.

You and your child can find further information in the brochures "Wie geht's – wie steht's!?" (How's it going – how's it hanging!?!?) and "SEX & TIPPS – Jungenfragen" (SEX & TIPS – boys' questions) (see notes).



THE GROWTH SPURT

Puberty lasts about three to four years in boys. During this time, young boys develop broader shoulders and increased muscle mass, but they retain a rather narrow pelvis. Sometimes at the beginning of puberty, boys develop lumps under the nipples or a slight breast protrusion. These breast protrusions are harmless and are related to the female sex hormones that the body produces in small amounts. They usually disappear all by themselves at the end of puberty.

The increased sebum production of the skin can lead to teenagers quickly developing oily hair and pimples or real acne. Just like for girls: Acne in pubescent teens should not be treated with commercially available creams; it should be treated professionally, for example by a dermatologist.

THE EXTERNAL CHARACTERISTICS OF PUBERTY

The voice starts changing rather late. This change is caused by the growth of the larynx. The vocal cords lengthen, and the voice becomes deeper. In the transitional phase, the voice of young boys often cracks, i.e. suddenly slip back into a high pitch.

The facial hair also starts to grow rather late, although a delicate fuzz can be seen much earlier in many teens. As their sweat and scent glands mature, they often develop a distinctive odor that changes over time.

If no typical signs of puberty such as a growth spurt or the onset of intimate hair growth are visible at the age of 13 or 14, you should take your child to see a doctor. They can clarify whether a hormonal disorder may be present.

"When I think about how naive and surprised I was when I ejaculated for the first time... I want to tell my son beforehand what it means when the time comes."

PARENT QUOTE

THE FIRST EJACULATION

During puberty, the first ejaculation often occurs involuntarily during sleep or masturbation. The majority of male adolescents experience it between the ages of 11 and 16.

Learning about this before the first ejaculation is a source of great relief for boys. Parents and especially fathers often think that there is still enough time to talk about puberty and the onset of sexual maturity. But the first ejaculation often comes sooner than you think. And most of the time you won't even know about it.

Male adolescents often want a male contact person to talk to about topics relating to sex. At the latest when you notice that your child is entering puberty, it is time to take a quiet minute to talk to them about the physical changes and the first ejaculation: What happens when and how does the first ejaculation occur? If it occurs unnoticed during sleep, this is normal and cannot be controlled. You can also tell your son this. This will help him to understand the situation and accept this developmental step.

Talk to your child about the fact that they are now able to procreate. Let him know that he can be proud of this developmental step, but that he should also be responsible in how he acts with it.

BE EMPATHIC

For most teenagers, it is not easy to cope with the changes of puberty, for example if they feel they are too early or too late in their physical development. As parents, you may not be aware of the crushes, new interests or mutual comparisons between peers and the comments made by classmates. However, as parents you often notice when your child is distressed, for example because they are worried that they are not developing normally. Take your child's insecurities and doubts seriously and don't try to appease them with statements such as "It will pass" or "It's what's inside that counts." Ask questions and be sensitive.

It can also help if you talk about the insecurities you had when you were going through puberty. But as difficult as it can sometimes be to watch, in the end your child has to manage on their own to feel comfortable (again) in their developing body. It will be easier for them if you support them in their development, answer their questions and help them look realistically at their assessments or fears about "being normal." If you notice that your child is unsure or doesn't want to talk to you, build a bridge. Suggest that they go to a counseling center or a pediatrician or general practitioner who will examine them in confidence and advise them on their questions.



GENDER DIVERSITY

Many children and young people are girls and boys and that is right for them. For others it is not so clear. The gender of your child is not necessarily visible on the body. For example, your child, who you previously perceived as a boy, may tell you that they identify as a girl. Or your child feels like a boy but is seen by everyone as a girl.

Some children are born with ambiguous female or male sexual characteristics. The technical term for this is intersex.

And there are children and young people who identify neither as a girl nor a boy. This means that they cannot or do not want to assign themselves to either gender. The correct term people use for this is non-binary. This may all sound unfamiliar and strange to you, and it may come with some challenges, but your child is best placed to know who they are, and they are just fine the way they are. Your child may feel this way and experience negative reactions in some areas of life. This makes it all the more important that you take your child seriously, accept them for who they are and how they feel, and support them in their development.

TRANS* CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

Some people realize at some point that they do not or only partially feel that they belong to the gender they were assigned at birth. They are called transsexual, transgender or simply trans. Trans is a collective term for a wide variety of self-definitions and identities.

Many trans people want to live in their perceived or self-chosen gender, and not in the gender they were assigned at birth. For example, a boy can clearly feel: "The gender doesn't suit me. I identify as a girl and want to be accepted as such." Over time, it may become apparent that this is not just a phase.

If your child does not feel comfortable in their assigned gender, it is important that parents and caregivers provide them with loving support and accompany them in their individual development. Let your child know that they can always turn to you.

If your child is trans, puberty can be extremely difficult for them as the body develops differently to how the child feels. Supporting their child during this time can also be a challenge for parents if they don't know how to deal with. Then it is helpful to contact a counseling center. They will take a close look at the situation and discuss with you and your child what they want and need. The child can be advised on whether and how to come out at school, with friends, in any groups for hobbies or extracurricular activities, etc. Such centers also look together with you and your child to see what support the child needs.

It is important and necessary for trans people to be able to be the gender in which they wish to live.



CHANGE OF GENDER ENTRY AND FIRST NAMES

With the entry into force of the Act on Self-Determination with regard to Gender Registration (known as the Self-Determination Act or by the German abbreviation SBGG) on November 1, 2024, it is now possible to have your gender entry and first name in the civil register changed to reflect your perceived gender identity by making a declaration to the registry office.

For minors up to the age of 14, the legal guardians can submit the declaration of change to the registry office in the presence of the minor. The declaration requires the consent of the child if they have reached the age of five.

Minors aged 14 and over can submit the declaration of change themselves. However, to be legally valid, the declaration requires the consent of the legal guardians.

There is also the option of gender reassignment surgery with psychological and medical support. Such gender reassignment measures are only possible from adolescence and should be carefully considered. It often makes sense to wait until adulthood. However, some trans people have only partial or no surgical and/or medical procedures carried out. Here, too, it is important to remember: Every person is different and unique.

INTERSEX CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

There are people who cannot be clearly assigned as female or male based on their physical sexual characteristics. This means that they have characteristics of female and male bodies. For example, they are born with a penis and a vagina or a vagina and testicles. These people are called intersex or inter.

Intersexuality occurs in all cultures and ethnicities and has always existed.

In most cases, doctors determine at birth that the genitals cannot be clearly assigned to the female or male sex. In the past, these children were nevertheless assigned a gender, i.e. male or female. This assigned gender was then entered accordingly on the birth certificate. With the consent of the parents, measures were then often taken very early on to adapt the bodies of intersex babies to the medical concepts of male and female. However, these treatments often have serious, lifelong consequences for the body and psyche of inter people. It is also not yet possible to predict at birth in which direction the child will develop. For this reason, since 2021, treatments aimed solely at conforming the body to the male or female norm have been prohibited for children who cannot give their consent.

Since 2018, it has been possible to enter intersex babies, in addition to the options "male" and "female," as "divers" ("non-binary") in the birth register. It has also been possible (since 2013) to omit gender information. This is intended to protect the right of self-determination of inter people.

However, some people only find out that they are intersex in the course of their lives. For example, a person may be born with female genitalia but have the male chromosomes pair XY. Intersexuality is therefore not recognizable from the external genitalia of this person.

It is estimated that in Germany, one in 60 children are born with an “ambiguous” gender. It is important to know that most intersex children are healthy and do not require medical or even surgical interventions. Some intersex people identify and feel as women, some as men. And some feel that they are both or do not belong to either gender.

The puberty of intersex children – like that of all others – is very individual. Nevertheless, specific questions may arise. To help answer these, it is advisable to contact specialists or interest groups of intersex people.

PERSONAL HYGIENE

Many young people start showering more frequently and using deodorant during puberty. But there are also young people who find hygiene completely superfluous. Smelling of sweat may be fine during sports, but it doesn't go down so well outside the gym.

Intimate hygiene for the vulva – warm water is enough

Proper intimate hygiene is part of preventive healthcare. Explain to your child how to do this: It is sufficient to clean the external genital organs, the vulva. The vulval lips (labia) should be gently spread apart and washed with warm water there and in the anal fissure. As a general rule, teenage girls should be a little more cautious when it comes to intimate hygiene and not use perfumed soaps, lotions, sprays or baby soaps. This is because such products harm the natural flora of the vagina, which is supposed to protect it from bacteria and keep it clean. Warm water is completely sufficient. If the vaginal flora is damaged or destroyed, bacteria can spread all the more, which can lead to inflammation, itching or unpleasant-smelling discharge. To prevent bacteria from the intestinal tract from entering the vagina, it is important to only wipe from front to back. And it is important to remember that tampons and pads should not be disposed of in the toilet, but in a sanitary bag.

Intimate hygiene for the penis

Here too, daily intimate hygiene is part of preventive healthcare: Explain to your child that he should carefully pull back the foreskin and wash the glans, penis shaft, testicles and anal fissure with warm water. It can already be determined here whether the foreskin is perhaps too tight (phimosis), or whether the foreskin can only be pulled partially or not at all over the glans because the frenulum is too short. The frenulum is a small band that attaches the foreskin to the underside of the glans. Even if the penis is stiff, it should be possible to pull the foreskin over the glans without any problems.

If your child believes he is suffering from phimosis, they should consult a doctor. A visit to a doctor is also necessary if your child experiences a persistent burning sensation when urinating or a purulent discharge from the urethra. In sexually active adolescents, these can be signs of a sexually transmitted infection (STI).

GETTING TO KNOW **YOUR OWN BODY**

Getting to know your own body helps you to feel whole and develop a positive relationship with yourself. At the same time, each person can get a feeling for whether and how their body is changing and whether everything is okay. It is therefore recommended that even young people feel themselves every now and then and examine themselves with a hand mirror.

In order to know their bodies well, it is interesting for adolescents to find out what their external sexual organs look and feel like: What does the vulva look like? These include the inner and outer vulval lips (labia) and the clitoris (clitoris). Or how do the breasts feel? Have the testicles changed or can the foreskin not or no longer be pulled properly over the glans? These are all things that they can pay attention to when looking at and feel them themselves.

SELF-EXAMINATION OF THE BREASTS

Even if the breasts are still developing, it makes sense for teenage girls to gradually get to know their own breasts by touching and feeling them. This means they always know exactly how they feel and how they change during growth and also during the menstrual cycle. Breast growth often starts with a small bump on one side only, directly under the nipple. This frightens some girls and their mothers, but it is quite typical and completely normal. Then the bump will soften and the breast will slowly get bigger. This process can look differently on each side. The breasts are often firm before menstruation (menstrual bleeding), afterwards they tend to be soft and loose. When your child is under a lot of stress, she may sometimes experience changes in her cycle that can be felt in her breasts. These changes can be felt if she touches her own breasts, e.g. in the shower, in the bath or when applying cream.

The best time for a self-examination is between the third and seventh day after the onset of menstruation (menstrual period), as this is when the breast tissue is particularly soft. If self-examination is carried out regularly, girls can quickly develop a good feeling for the condition of their own breasts and any changes can be detected more quickly. Your daughter's gynecologist can give further tips on checking her breasts with palpation.

Breast palpation by a gynecologist is part of the cancer screening examination, which every woman is entitled to once a year from the age of 20. Otherwise, the breast is only examined if there are symptoms.

If you or your daughter have any questions or if something seems strange or unusual, it is best to speak to a gynecologist.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT GYNECOLOGIST

Support your child in determining the time and circumstances of her first visit to a gynecologist. This includes choosing a doctor on her own based on criteria such as sympathy and trust. This means that the child does not necessarily have to see the same doctor as their family members.

In addition to specialists in private practice, some advice centers offer a good opportunity to get to know a what a gynecological examination is like. They have an examination room and the correct instruments on their premises. This provides the teen with the opportunity to take a look at everything before the actual examination, sit in the examination chair to try out how it feels and have the procedure of a visit to a gynecologist's office explained to them. Such a visit, for example for advice on contraceptives, can also take place without an examination.

REASONS WHY A GIRL SHOULD SEE A PEDIATRICIAN OR GYNECOLOGIST COULD BE THE FOLLOWING:

- # No menstruation and other pubertal characteristics by the age of 16
- # No menstruation for more than three months after menstruation has already started, without pregnancy
- # Shifts of several weeks between menstrual cycles or abnormal bleeding between periods
- # Severe abdominal pain before and during menstruation, but also outside menstruation
- # Thick and/or unpleasant smelling discharge
- # A burning sensation or pain when urinating
- # Noticeable nodules in the chest or groin area
- # The desire to obtain information about contraception or to be prescribed the pill or other hormonal contraceptives
- # Questions about physical development (e.g. if the breasts are perceived as too small or different), sex, relationships and contraception, pain during menstruation or if it is heavy or infrequent, but also if it has not yet started
- # Abnormalities on the vulva (external genital area)
- # Itching and pain in the vulva (external genital area)
- # Fear of having contracted a sexually transmitted infection (STI)
- # Advice on protection against STIs
- # Pain during sexual intercourse
- # A vaccination request – e.g. against the human papilloma virus (HPV)
- # Injuries in the genital area

SELF PALPATION OF PENIS AND TESTICLES

Regular self-examination of the penis and testicles is important and does not require any special medical knowledge. A good time to do this is after a shower or bath, for example, because the scrotum is then relaxed due to the warmth and can be palpated more easily. Changes that are not painful but can be discovered during a self-examination are, for example, a varicose vein in the testicles (varicocele), which can be felt as a slight thickening. It occurs in about one in ten boys, usually on the left side. It is harmless, but can affect fertility in the long term.

Whether treatment is advisable should be clarified with a doctor. Pediatricians are the first port of call. Another special feature that is harmless but can unsettle young boys is a sliding or retractile testicle. This is a phenomenon in which a testicle temporarily disappears into the inguinal canal, but can be felt in the scrotum again a short time later.



A visit to a pediatrician can be a good opportunity for your child to find out more.

EARLY DETECTION OF TESTICULAR CANCER

In young people, regular self-examination can also help to detect testicular cancer at an early stage, which can usually be felt as a painless hardening or enlargement. These hardenings are easy to find because they are easy to feel. This can easily be done during daily hygiene care routines. For instance, young boys can feel their scrotum while showering and look for any abnormalities. Testicular cancer is the most common cancer in men between the ages of 20 and 30. People who were treated for undescended testicles in childhood are particularly at risk. An undescended testicle is a sliding testicle that does not migrate back into the scrotum on its own.

Parents should talk to their children about such a condition and its possible long-term consequences.

AN ATTACHMENT FIGURE AS A ROLE MODEL

The most common reasons that prevent young people from consulting a doctor when in doubt are shame, fear and hope: "It will go away on its own." Role models who regularly examine themselves and have already had a check-up send an important message here: "It strengthens me to take good care of myself and my body and to have regular check-ups."



THE J1 YOUTH HEALTH CHECK-UP

The J1 youth health check-up is carried out between the ages of 12 and 14. Your son or daughter can also use this last upcoming early detection and preventive check-up for children to talk to the doctor about intimate matters, fears or problems without their parents. Encourage your child to do this.

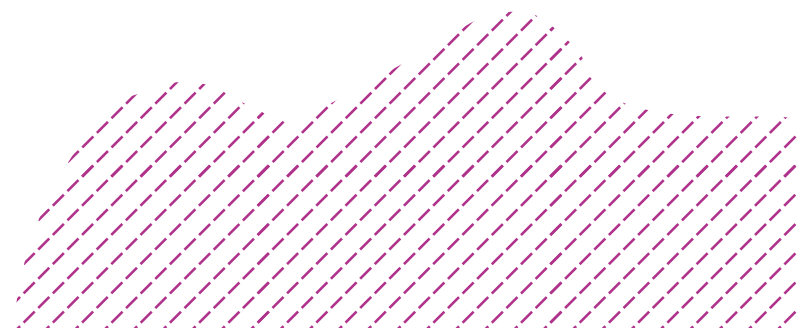
REASONS WHY A BOY SHOULD SEE A PEDIATRICIAN COULD BE THE FOLLOWING:

- # Questions about physical development (e.g. the penis is perceived as too small), sex, relationships and contraception
- # Pain and/or itching of the penis or when urinating
- # The surface of the penis or the scrotum looks strange
- # It is not possible to clean the penis properly because the foreskin cannot be pushed back
- # A constant pulling sensation in the groin or pain in the testicles
- # A lump found in the groin area
- # Fear of having contracted a sexually transmitted infection (STI)
- # Advice on protection against STIs
- # Pain during sexual intercourse
- # A vaccination request – e.g. against the human papilloma virus (HPV)
- # Changes to the penis or testicles; this can be, for example, an inflamed area on the skin of the penis, a strange secretion coming from the urethra, a difference in size between the two testicles or the surface does not feel smooth
- # Pain in the penis or testicles, for example during masturbation, sex or urination
- # Injury to the penis and/or testicles, e.g. due to a kick to the genital area
- # Sexual problems, the penis does not get hard during sexual intercourse or ejaculation occurs too quickly

A WORD ON BEAUTY AND **BODY IDEALS**

Most young people care a lot how they look when they leave the house. They attach great importance to looking good, they put on make-up, style their hair and think carefully about what to wear. And they look at their bodies very critically: Suddenly, more and more areas appear that are supposedly less attractive. Young people worry about whether they are tall enough and developed enough. Whether other people will find them beautiful and whether they will be attracted to them. Young people who have strong self-doubts, for example about their weight, may find it particularly difficult to confide in their parents.

Among young people, it's almost commonplace to be upset about extra pounds, even though their weight is usually completely normal. While anorexia or severe obesity are visible to others, children affected by bulimia can often hide their illness from their social environment, including their parents, for a long period of time. In the past, it was mainly girls who were affected by eating disorders. Today, there are also more and more boys who have an eating disorder.



Media, especially social media, and peers create social pressure that can put a strain on young people, even if they know that the bodies depicted are not real or have been digitally “touched up.” Talking to a trusted person about depictions in the media and the actual reality can help to realistically classify images, clips and films.



CONSIDERING THE POSSIBILITY OF AN EATING DISORDER

Girls often say that they do not find themselves beautiful. Some put themselves under so much pressure due to prevailing beauty ideals that they consider having cosmetic surgery. As parents, you should strengthen their positive image of themselves by reminding them that everyone is different and very special and that they are fine the way they are.

If you have the impression that your child is overly preoccupied with food and is permanently dissatisfied with their own body, you should at least consider the possibility of an eating disorder and inform yourself about suitable support measures (www.bzga-esss-toerungen.de).

Perhaps you can show your children role models from (social) media or watch films with them that convey realistic body images. Books can also be suitable media for communicating the topic of body positivity, i.e. the acceptance and appreciation of different body shapes.

THE THING ABOUT AMBITION

One of the most important areas for physical self-awareness for young people is sport. In this environment they compete with others and can test how skilled or strong they are and whether they have talent as athletes. They also have the opportunity to get to know their bodies better and enjoy exercise, whether individually or as part of a team. Being fit and well-trained impresses their peers in particular. There are also many sports programs that are aimed at young people with disabilities and support them in being active and successful in sports.

HOWEVER...

Exercise is good – but at the same time, when visiting a gym, it is important to ensure that the exercises are executed correctly and that dietary supplements and anabolic agents are viewed critically. Taking growth stimulants can become an addiction for some people. Similar to anorexia, sufferers mistakenly believe that they are only doing good for themselves and their bodies and that they have everything under control. However, they are not really satisfied even after achieving the goals they have set.



THESE MIGHT MAKE YOUR CHILD HAPPY:

- # Encouragement, compliments and praise if your child struggles with their appearance
- # A nice smelling toner or aftershave or other skincare products
- # A heart-to-heart conversation from parent to child
- # Interesting and informative websites, books, brochures and comics about puberty, beauty ideals and the body

INFLUENCERS: DO YOU KNOW YOUR CHILD'S ROLE MODELS?

Ask your child if they agree to you looking at their TikTok or Instagram account and/or favorite videos and YouTube channels together with them. Talk calmly about the ideals of beauty that are represented there and consider together in which cases it is more a case of an “embellished” reality. Most images in films and social media are touched up and thus depict ideals of beauty that are ultimately unattainable.

Teenagers prefer to spend time where their parents are not. Of course, they also want to have their own space where their parents are not present. Nevertheless, it is important to question these points together critically and not dismissively. Is what I see there genuine and realistic? Are the messages I can read here all true? Are they all good role models?

WHAT IS YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR OWN BODY?

Even if it sometimes doesn't seem that way, parents are important guides for young people, also when it comes to appearance, figure and weight issues. Show your child how great, freeing and relaxing it is to be able to let go of exaggerated ideas of beauty and look at your own body as it is with kindness. The more your child struggles with their body, the more they need your reassurance that they are a lovable, valuable person. If it's helpful, you can also discuss what makes a person who they are and valued, and that looks are only part of it. Especially during puberty, many young people are very sensitive to critical or “funny” comments about their weight and figure.



THE WORLD OF LOVE IS DIVERSE

LGBTQIA+, HETERO
ETC.

During puberty, young people also have their first relationship experiences. Perhaps your child already has a girlfriend or boyfriend. Perhaps they want to take their time. But what they definitely want to find out for themselves is who they will actually fall in love with and how they feel about themselves as a person. For some, this is clear quite early on, for others it takes longer to become aware of it.

You may have heard or read the abbreviation LGBTQIA+. But does it mean?

WHAT DOES LGBTIQA+ MEAN?

The abbreviation LGBTIQA+ stands for people who feel they belong to the queer community. This means that people belong to this community who are either not heterosexual or not cisgender.

What do the letters stand for?**L = lesbian****G = gay****B = bisexual****T = trans****I = intersex****Q = queer (collective term and self-designation of people who are not heterosexual or cisgender)****A = agender/asexual****WHAT DOES CIS MEAN?**

Cisgender means that a person identifies with the gender they were assigned at birth. If someone is assigned male on their birth certificate and also identifies as male, then this person is cisgender. If a person identifies as female and has been assigned to the gender female, this person is also cisgender.

The “+” stands for the different gender variations and is intended to ensure that no one is excluded. The term “queer” means that a person rejects society’s view of “binary gender.” The term also refers to sexual orientation. It is also used as a collective term for people who are not cisgender and/or not heterosexual.

FINDING YOUR OWN IDENTITY

Many young people discover new topics and questions for themselves during puberty and try to find answers to them. Queer young people are often still unsure of their feelings and desires and can be in a phase of inner and outer discovery. If the young people are sure that they are queer, it is challenging and at the same time helpful to clarify things.

An important decision for queer young people is to be honest with themselves and take what their feelings tell them seriously. It’s about accepting themselves and being accepted by their family and friends.

COMING OUT TO PARENTS

The step of confiding in one’s parents in particular often takes a lot of courage and usually comes at the end of a long series of conversations that have already been held with friends. It may also require a fair deal of strength and understanding from the parents to accept and process this new information. Always try to keep in mind that your child deserves all your love, no matter who they love or who they want to be in a relationship with or not.

**YOU CAN FIND MORE INFORMATION HERE**

Information brochures, literature tips and contact addresses in the notes of this brochure.



THESE MIGHT MAKE YOUR CHILD HAPPY:

- # A lot of understanding when they are newly in love and can't think about anything else
- # Comfort and encouragement when a relationship is over
- # To be left alone as much as possible when the girlfriend or boyfriend is there
- # Delicate discussions about contraception and sexually transmitted infections
- # To be given suitable educational books, brochures or a novel about the first love or puberty

STRUGGLING WITH PREJUDICES

People talk about sex much more openly today than they did a few years ago. Many people are quite open about it. Nevertheless, there are still some negative clichés, prejudices and stereotypes about queer people. "You fag" is still one of the most popular insults thrown around among boys. It is often not clear to those who use the word what it actually means. For fear of bullying, many boys try to be seen as "masculine." In most cases, they also refrain from being affectionate with their friends in public or expressing their feelings for each other in order to avoid being labeled in any way. Girls are often more open. It is also less "alien" to see girls holding hands. This is more likely to be tolerated by society, but not so much for boys.

"LET'S TALK ABOUT IT"

If the topic comes up and you think that your child is queer, it is usually a relief to your child and a great help if you address the topic in a respectful way and do not ignore it.

It may help you to find out more yourself first, e.g. with the help of brochures or online resources (see notes).

If you are yourself unsure of how you feel, you may find it easier if you are supported by someone you trust. In addition to individual counseling sessions, some counseling centers also host groups where you can talk with other parents. You can also contact associations or organizations that represent the interests of queer people.

Coming out is often the beginning of a process that is not an easy one for the child. It can also be challenging for parents. At the same time, however, it offers the opportunity to master this life situation together. No one is asking parents to immediately shed all their own uncertainties and questions. Take your time to get used to the new situation. Ask questions with interest and listen to familiarize yourself with the situation, which may be something completely new to you. You may feel disappointed or have reacted rather brusquely to the coming out. Even then, it is not too late to seek each other out and show understanding. You can also express your empathy or affirmation by, for example, hanging up a rainbow flag or openly wearing other queer symbols.



THE START OF YOUR TEENAGER'S **SEX LIFE**

YOUTH SEXUALITY TODAY

"I would actually like her to have sex for the first time at 16 at the earliest. I myself was just 15 at the time and had only been with my boyfriend of the same age for three months. With hindsight, I think it would have been better to wait a little longer to get to know each other better."

PARENT QUOTE**FINDING YOUR OWN WAY**

Even if you find it difficult to support your child's love life in a calm and cool-headed manner: Calmness is the best attitude to have when your child has questions or worries. Your child now wants to be in control of themselves and their sexuality. The more you try to interfere in your child's life during the detachment phase, the more they may keep from you. And despite all resistance, they will probably do just what they want to do.

Parents who, for example, want to denigrate or even forbid their child from having a romantic relationship with someone often find that their child clings to this partner in particular and secretly continues the relationship. Try to accept your child's choice even if you don't personally like the boyfriend or girlfriend. Keep the doors open for your child and their boyfriends or girlfriends.

Exception: If you are sure that the relationship is harming your child, then you need to talk to them about this and make your position clear.

DOES IT ALWAYS HAPPEN EARLIER AND EARLIER?

First of all, assume that your child is much more "responsible" about sex than you think. After all, you, the teachers, educators and other caregivers have usually already been able to teach your child a lot about sex, values and mutual respect. Overall, the assumption that more and more teenagers are having sexual experiences at an early age is also wrong. Around one third of all 17-year-olds have still not had sexual intercourse (BZgA, Youth Sexuality 2019). The assumption that sex is no longer about love for today's young people cannot be confirmed either. Despite, or perhaps because, of the many dating portals and quickly consumable sex videos, young people long for fidelity and romantic love and would prefer to experience their first time with someone they trust (source: Youth Sexuality Study 2019).

SHARE YOUR OPINION

You can encourage young people to pay attention to their own feelings when it comes to sexuality and their first sexual intercourse. Talk about the fact that sex is voluntary and that no one should be pressured or forced into it. Real friends respect when the other person does not want to have sex yet. Especially those who are desperate to experience their first time so as not to be seen as sexually inexperienced next to their friends can benefit from their parents' encouragement to listen to their own feelings rather than the opinions of others. However, young people don't like it when their parents preach to them or dogmatically forbid them to do things. However, there is a legal framework in place that regulates when a young person is allowed to have sex (e.g. French kissing, petting, sexual intercourse). Among other things, it is regulated by law that sex with another person is permitted from the age of 14. This must be consensual and no one may be pressured into it. As a parent, you can clearly state this.

"Is my child also being careful? Are they protecting themselves sufficiently? Have I done everything I can to prepare them for their sex life?"

PARENT QUOTE



A SMALL TIP

The BiÖG brochure series **SEX & TIPS** for young people covers many topics relating to sex, relationships, love, contraception and gender diversity. You can easily order these pocket brochures on the page www.bioeg.de under the heading "Information materials."

On the website www.love-line.de your child can also find out more, download the brochures or ask questions. This page is aimed specifically at young people – information is also available here in simplified language.

Important to know: Sex with another person under the age of 14 is sexual abuse / statutory rape and is prohibited. However, the court may refrain from imposing a penalty if the age difference between the parties involved is small and the sex is consensual.

Also: Adults may not have sex with persons under the age of 18 if they have been entrusted to them as wards. This includes teaching staff and educators.



TALKING CAN HELP

Where sex and contraception are discussed at home, contraception works better the first time.

(Source: Youth Sexuality Study 2019)

IT'S ALL ABOUT CONTRACEPTION

Pregnancy prevention and safe sex are the big issues that most concern parents with pubescent children. Thanks to the general acceptance of condoms and the continued widespread use of the pill, contraceptive behavior has improved significantly in recent decades (source: Youth Sexuality Study 2019). At 73%, the condom is the most commonly used contraceptive among adolescents during their first sexual intercourse and the pill is the second most used at 40%. The dual strategy of condoms and the pill is also used. This has the advantage of contraception and simultaneous protection against contracting a sexually transmitted infection (STI). In steady relationships, contraception often only involves the pill. Use of the pill has declined in recent years. This is also due to the fact that the effects of the pill on health are viewed more critically. Nevertheless, young people can still find themselves in the situation of accidentally becoming a mother or father or contracting a sexually transmitted infection. Talk to your child about the different options for contraception and safe sex.

"My father never talked to me about sex, I was quite alone with my many questions. I definitely want to do things differently with my son. We now talk more often about things like girls and sex. It has really improved our relationship."

PARENT QUOTE

FIRST SEXUAL EXPERIENCES

GIRLS AND FEMALE SEXUALITY

Many girls start thinking about their first time long before the time comes. They sit with their best friend and talk about when the right time is and who the right partner might be. For many, it is important to experience their first sexual intercourse with someone they love and trust.

MASTURBATION AS THE DISCOVERY OF LUST

Depending on how open and trusting your relationship with your child is, feel free to talk about the subject of lust. Girls often do not have a nice word for their external sexual organs and they do not pleasure themselves as often as boys of the same age. Compared to boys, girls have less experience in interacting with their bodies and how they experience them, for example during arousal or relief. Many of them don't know exactly where the clitoris is and how they can touch themselves to achieve an orgasm. You can do a lot to give your child a positive body image by openly discussing topics such as body image and masturbation. Of course, it makes no sense to insist on such a conversation. You should only try it if you realize that your child would like to talk to you about it.

BOYS AND MALE SEXUALITY

Unlike girls, boys are less likely to talk about their first time with their friends beforehand. Many tend to deal with what concerns them on their own. Like girls, boys also think about sex. They worry that their girlfriend or boyfriend might find their penis too small or too curved. The erection could weaken at the crucial moment or the ejaculation could come too quickly. When it comes to their first time, most boys feel enormous pressure to perform and not to fail under any circumstances. This is because, in the perception of boys, it is not the first ejaculation, i.e. reaching sexual maturity, but the first sexual intercourse that turns a boy into a man.

TAKE THE PRESSURE OFF YOUR CHILD

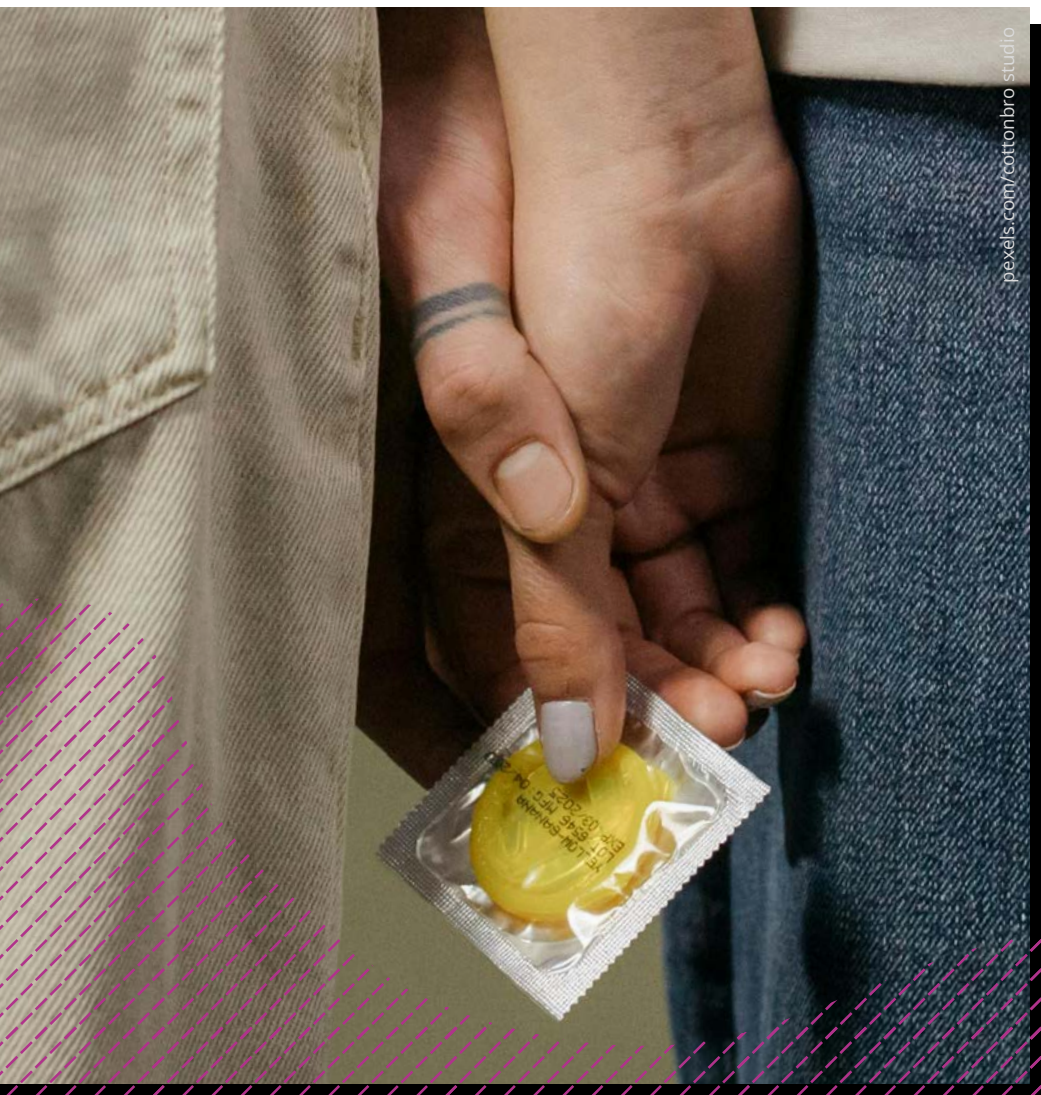
As a parent, you may be unsure about talking to your child about love, sex and feelings, but your child can learn from your experiences by talking to you. Talk about how the first time is not a competition, but an emotional, loving affair between two people. Nobody has to prove themselves. It's quite normal for things not to "work" right on the first go.

Trust that your child will listen to you and also be open to conversation if you treat them with kindness and openness. This may not work at the first attempt. But don't let this discourage you and try again.



STRENGTHEN THE SEXUAL SELF-CONFIDENCE OF YOUR CHILD

As parents, you can encourage your child to express their own feelings and wishes to their partner. But also encourage your child to show their own boundaries and at the same time respect those of the other person.



RESPONSIBLE AND **SAFE SEX**

SEX AND CONTRACEPTION

Talking to your child about contraception and safe sex requires sensitivity and is also very important. In this chapter you will find basic information on the topic as well as tips on how to talk to your child.

CONTRACEPTION FOR THE FIRST TIME

Young people attach great importance to safe contraception (source: Youth Sexuality Study 2019). For most of them, the possibility of having a child as a teenager is unimaginable. At the same time, young people want to live out their sexuality freely and independently, but also to protect themselves from sexually transmitted infections. However, getting started with sex can be risky because they are still inexperienced.

It therefore makes sense for parents to talk to their child about contraception at an early age. And associated with this, the topics of unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Start a conversation on your own initiative if you suspect that your child is about to become sexually active, and not only when your child informs you of their first time. You can also discuss the topic of responsibility here. Make sure your child understands that contraception concerns both people involved in sex and should therefore be discussed together. This also applies to choosing the right contraceptive method.

FERTILITY AND PREGNANCY

Girls and women are most likely to become pregnant around the time of ovulation. This cannot be calculated to the day. The menstrual cycle of an adult woman lasts around 25-35 days.

The length of the cycle can vary greatly in adolescents. This means that fertile days during puberty are even less predictable. With a very short cycle, ovulation can also take place a few days after menstruation.



HAVE COURAGE

Have the confidence to talk to your child about contraception on your own initiative. Create a neutral, informal atmosphere for a conversation.

During unprotected sexual intercourse, around 200 to 400 million sperm cells make their way towards the fallopian tubes after ejaculation in order to fertilize an egg. While most sperm cells die in the acidic environment of the vagina, the sperm that reaches the uterus can survive for two to five, sometimes even seven days and remain capable of fertilization!

Even sexual intercourse during menstruation (period bleeding) can lead to pregnancy if the cycle is very short and no contraceptives are used. Incidentally, sperm can already be contained in the pre-ejaculate, or pre-cum, which is secreted from the tip of the penis before the actual ejaculation, and thus lead to pregnancy.

THE PILL, CONDOMS AND OTHER CONTRACEPTION: WHAT IS THE RIGHT CONTRACEPTIVE?

When deciding for or against a particular contraceptive method, there are various aspects to weigh up. It is particularly important for teenagers that the contraceptive be easy to use and safe at the same time. But it should also have few to no side effects and shouldn't cost much.



EXPERTS ADVISE AGAINST THE FOLLOWING CONTRACEPTIVE METHODS "TO START WITH":

- # Natural family planning (calculating the fertile days) is not particularly safe.
- # Barrier methods such as the diaphragm are only recommended for people who are familiar with their bodies and have practiced inserting them correctly.



THE RIGHT SIZE

It is important to pay attention to the size and fit of condoms. If the condom is too small, it can tear, and if it is too big, it can slip off. In both cases, reliable protection is not possible. It is therefore important to know and use the right size. The fit can also have an influence on how the condom sits in place and thus supports successful contraception.

THE PILL

The pill is the contraceptive most commonly used by girls. The pill only fails to provide protection if you forget to take it or if the active ingredients (artificial hormones) cannot be fully absorbed by the body due to diarrhea or vomiting after taking the pill. Taking certain medications, such as those for epilepsy, can also affect contraceptive safety. To clarify this, the package leaflet should be read carefully and, if in doubt, the doctor should be consulted.

In addition to its high level of safety, the pill has the advantage that it can be discontinued at short notice if you no longer wish to take it. The pill can cause side effects such as headaches, breast tenderness or an increased risk of thrombosis.

The pill is free of charge for adolescents and young adults up to the age of 22. From the 18th birthday, a prescription fee of five to ten euros is charged. This depends on the price of the respective preparation. Although the pill is currently still the most commonly used hormonal contraceptive, its use has declined in recent years (source: Youth Sexuality Study 2019).

THE CONDOM

The condom is the only contraceptive that boys can use and that also protects against HIV infection in all genders and reduces the risk of infection with other sexually transmitted infections (STIs). It is also the most commonly used contraceptive for first sexual intercourse. Although the principle is quite simple, using a condom requires some practice. A simple guide with instructions on what the teen needs to keep in mind can be found here on the internet: www.loveline.de/themen/verhuetung/das-kondom/anwendung

Encourage your child to simply try out which condom suits them best. Contraception can only be successful if the condom fits and is used correctly. The size can be easily determined using the BIÖG condometer (see notes).

Also let them know that it is not embarrassing to buy condoms in a store. And why not offer to pay for them to encourage them to make a trial purchase?

However, the use of condoms is not just a matter for boys or men. The partner can, of course, help put it on.

THE MORNING-AFTER PILL

If a condom breaks, the pill is forgotten or no contraceptives are used at all, the morning-after pill is a kind of emergency contraceptive that young people should definitely know about. It delays ovulation so that the egg and sperm cannot meet. The morning-after pill should be taken as soon as possible within the first 24 hours after a contraceptive failure. This is when it is safest. There are various pills. Some are effective up to 72 hours (three days) at most, others up to 120 hours (five days) after failed contraception. The earlier it is taken, the higher the probability of success. The morning-after pill is available over the counter from pharmacies, but in this case there is a charge. If you have a doctor's prescription, it is available free of charge for people up to age 22.

Encourage your child to find information for themselves. The website www.loveline.de is aimed specifically at young people. Its subpage <https://herzfröh.loveline.de> also provides information in simplified language so that young people with cognitive disabilities can also find out about contraceptives and contraceptive methods.



AN OVERVIEW OF CONTRACEPTIVES

Inform yourself about the current state of knowledge regarding possible contraceptives before you talk to your child about contraceptive options. You can find a current list of advantages and disadvantages here:

<https://shop.bioeg.de/themen/familienplanung>

HIV AND OTHER SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS (STIS)

CONDOMS PROTECT YOU!

If you don't want to become a parent, you should use contraception with care. Using a condom during sex is also extremely important for young people for a completely different reason: protection against HIV and other STIs.

Sexually transmitted infections (STIs for short) have seen an increase in recent years. Examples are chlamydia or genital warts. Therefore, all sexually active people should know how they can protect themselves against an STI or how to recognize one.

Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) also include HIV (human immunodeficiency virus). In view of the low number of new infections each year, the risk of young people contracting HIV is relatively low but still present. But the risk of infection has not changed. Even if HIV medication ensures that HIV-positive people are no longer infectious and their life expectancy is not reduced, HIV is still not curable. Information on sexually transmitted infections and protection options can be found at www.loveline.de and www.liebesleben.de.

If you talk to your child about protection using condoms, they will not only know more about it afterwards, but may also be more confident to talk to their partner about it. Sometimes sexually inexperienced young people have a condom within reach but end up not using it. For example, because the boy is afraid that his erection will weaken before he puts on the condom or because his partner is too uncomfortable about asking him to use one. What is usually lacking in such situations is the courage (and practice) to talk to each other and openly express wishes or fears. You can encourage your child to do this.

HOW DO I RECOGNIZE AN STI?

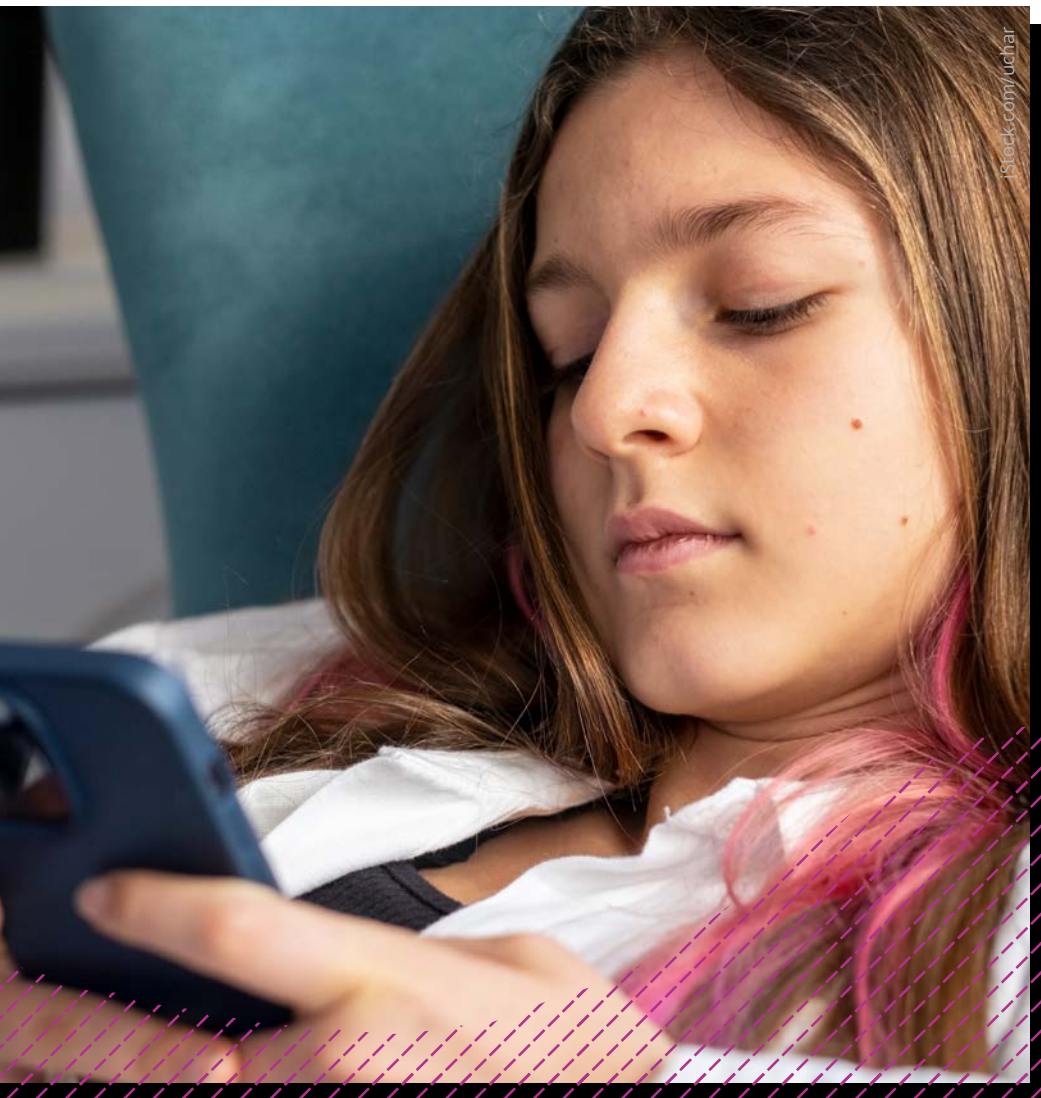
An infection occurs when pathogens of a sexually transmitted disease enter the body. There are different ways in which bacteria or viruses, for example, can enter the body. One is contact with bodily fluids, such as semen or vaginal fluids. On the other hand, infection can also occur through contact with mucous membranes in the vagina, penis, anus or mouth as well as through contact with skin lesions such as herpes blisters, genital warts or syphilis ulcers.

It is often difficult to correctly interpret the signs of a sexually transmitted infection. Who would associate their flu-like symptoms or swollen lymph nodes with a sexually transmitted infection? Some STIs make themselves known, others are completely asymptomatic. Regular check-ups can therefore help to detect infections at an early stage, such as chlamydia screening. You can find further information about this at www.liebesleben.de.



**IF YOUR CHILD
NOTICES THE
FOLLOWING SIGNS, A
TRIP TO A DOCTOR
IS ADVISED:**

- # Unusual discharge from the vagina, penis or anus as well as intermenstrual bleeding
- # Burning and pain when urinating or during sex
- # Itching, reddening of the skin and skin changes – especially on the vagina, penis, anus or mouth



MEDIA AND SEX

CELL PHONES AND SOCIAL MEDIA

The range of different media and content is growing all the time. On the one hand, this is confusing, as it is not easy to find your way around. On the other hand, everyone has the opportunity to find content that appeals to them. However, it is important to learn to differentiate between trustworthy, factually correct information and false information in view of the abundance of offers. You can support your child in this. Go in search of suitable media or people who can be a role model for your child or provide guidance – preferably together with your child. And if you can't find what you're looking for yourself, ask specialist advice centers or self-help associations what might be suitable (see notes).

SEX AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media such as YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat, WhatsApp, Facebook and TikTok are central to young people's lives. There are videos, pictures and comments on every topic imaginable. Children and young people look at what their "idols" are doing and talk with others. But they also put themselves out there. They post photos, design websites, make tutorial videos and network. As a parent, it is useful to find out at what age an app may be used or game may be played.

However, the influence of social media has also changed the presentation of sexual topics and content.

Young people's reactions to the portrayal of sex in the media can vary greatly. They range from disgust when love scenes are shown on television to being amused or embarrassed. From a certain age, young people are very interested in erotic content: They watch clips on YouTube, receive and send clear but also ambiguously suggestive images and photos via WhatsApp. They are curious and boast about their detailed knowledge at school.

SAFETY ONLINE

You can find a good overview of all social media and their use specifically for children and young people on the website of the EU's Safe Online Initiative: www.klicksafe.de

WHAT DOES THIS DO TO MY CHILD?

Parents cannot prevent their child from coming into contact with images and information about sex. Pornography is also part of this. This makes children and young people curious, but at the same time it can be very disturbing.

Many young people are able to separate reality and virtuality. They are usually very good at distinguishing between what is still within the bounds and what is a no-go. Nevertheless, it is important to help them to understand what they have seen and to convey that porn is not reality. This can be seen, for example, in the stereotypical gender roles portrayed in many porn films. You can help your child to question what they see.

SUPPORT YOUR CHILD IN THE WORLD OF MEDIA

To ensure that children and young people learn to competently navigate the variety of media, it makes sense to closely monitor their media consumption. Surf the internet together. Ask which sites your child uses and give them tips on what they should look out for. Answers to the question of where to find trustworthy sources and how to recognize them are also important.

It is often the duration of use that worries many parents, but also the content or the fact that they don't know where their child is going on their forays into the digital world.

But be honest: Would you give up your smartphone because it is known to have bad sides? It's like road traffic: We all know that it's dangerous, but we don't want to or can't do without transport. It is therefore important to prepare your child for using digital media.

Talk to your child regularly about what they are doing with their smartphone. You can discuss apps together and try out offers suitable for young people. It can also be helpful to introduce a regular schedule to discuss this, for example every three months.

SPEAKING OF SMARTPHONES

For the vast majority of young people, smartphones and other digital devices are a completely normal means of communicating and organizing their everyday lives. Within the peer group, however, the smartphone is often even more: It highlights a person's status, while at the same time enabling them to always be up to date and access information. It also helps young people to distance themselves from their parents and be active on social media, for example, where there are no adults. In this way, your child conquers new areas of experience that help them to become independent.

Sometimes it's good to take a break from digital devices and/or smartphones – for children and young people, but also for adults. For example, during shared meals, during conversations or activities. Or you can arrange cell phone-free periods such as an evening during the week, a weekend or a few days on vacation. It is particularly beneficial when the cell phone-free time is used for joint activities for the whole family. It is helpful in this regard to set up a few rules – in the best case together with your teen. And of course everyone should stick to the rules – children and parents alike. If you show your child that it is possible to manage without a cell phone, this will also have an effect on their attitude and how they use it.

PARENT QUOTE

"In our house, all cell phones are on the cupboard and not on the dining table. The three of us have agreed on it and that's final."

CLEAR RULES ARE IMPORTANT

- # Discuss fixed rules for television, internet and smartphones together. How long can you watch for? What exactly can you watch?
- # Pay attention to the age rating of movies – this also applies to video games. If in doubt, make your own judgment as to whether the film or game is appropriate for your child's level of development.
- # In the beginning, supervise your child's smartphone and internet use and inform them about the potential dangers of pornography sites, paid services or the handling of confidential data.
- # Also be aware of your child's media consumption with friends. Clarify with the parents concerned what rules apply in their households and have the courage to express concerns or set your own boundaries if necessary.
- # Of course, you should secure erotic films or similar media for your own use so that your child cannot access them.
- # You can also use technical measures:
 - # Set up safe surfing systems
 - # Install parental control programs – you can find information at www.klicksafe.de or www.juuuport.de
 - # Use search engines for children
 - # Use a "SafeSearch filter" (filters out a lot of offensive content)



iStock.com/Halfpoint

PROTECTION FROM SEXUALIZED VIOLENCE

WHAT TO DO IF...

Despite all the care and protection you give your child, it is possible that children and young people may experience sexualized violence.

- # In 2021, 15,520 cases of child sexual abuse were reported in Germany.
 - # Of those affected, 74% were female and 26% male.
 - # The number of unreported cases of sexualized violence is probably much higher.
 - # 25% of all sexualized acts of violence take place in the immediate family circle and 50% in the social environment.
 - # 75-90% of offenders are male and 10-25% are female.
 - # Children and young people with a disability have a two to three times higher risk of experiencing sexualized violence.
- (Source: www.beauftragte-missbrauch.de; 2023)

WHERE DOES SEXUALIZED VIOLENCE BEGIN?

We speak of sexualized violence when a person is attacked with words or actions that are “meant” sexually, for example to humiliate or demean the person. Sexualized violence takes many forms. For example, it can take the form of sexually connoted insults, unwanted touching in intimate areas of the body or forced sexual acts. Sexualized violence can be perpetrated by relatives, members of the immediate family, acquaintances or strangers. Not every sexual assault leads to deep traumatization, but it is often not without consequences for those affected. This is because sexualized violence affects a very intimate area of life in which children and young people are particularly vulnerable. Sexualized violence is, for example, when young people are touched by their peers or older people on the breasts, buttocks or genitals against their will.

Sexualized violence also includes when young people are asked to touch other young people or adults intimately against their will or are made to watch porn or someone pleasuring themselves.

It is also considered sexualized violence if children or young people are not forced or coerced into sexual acts not with direct physical violence, but with subtle threats or other means of coercion.

Particularly serious forms of sexualized violence are oral, vaginal or anal rape or an attempt of such.

CYBERGROOMING OR SEXUAL ASSAULT ON THE INTERNET

Cybergrooming is the targeted approaching of people on the internet with the aim of initiating sexual contact.

In these situations, adults pretend to be children or young people in online forums/chats and social networks. The majority are men. In some cases, the perpetrators ask for intimate photos or videos of the children and young people. The aim of the grooming is to meet the child or young person in real life in order to sexually abuse them or make pornographic images.



TRAUMA

Negative or traumatizing experiences in this area of life can have affects not only on later sex life, but also far-reaching psychological and physical consequences.

BOYS CAN BE VICTIMS TOO

Although it is mainly girls who are affected by sexualized violence, boys can also be victims. Due to their socialization, boys find it particularly difficult to confide in someone in such cases. Although what happened was in no way shape or form their fault, boys often do blame themselves for not having defended themselves sufficiently.

BE ATTENTIVE, LISTEN, LOOK

Children and young people often find it difficult to talk about it when they have experienced sexualized violence. The perpetrators often put the victims of sexualized violence under massive pressure by claiming that something terrible will happen if they tell someone else about the crime. It is therefore important for parents to listen to their child and believe them when they make allusions to having experienced sexual violence; even if they don't want to believe it at first because they may know the perpetrator well. Be aware that the vast majority of perpetrators come from the immediate social environment.

WHAT CAN I DO?

Sex education at home and at school can make an important contribution to the prevention of sexualized violence. Girls and boys who are informed and whose families talk openly about sexuality know how they can communicate with their parents and confidants. They can express their feelings better, perceive boundaries better and make them clear. They can say what happened because they know words for the genitals, and it is often easier for them to talk about embarrassing and shameful things. However, children and young people cannot protect themselves alone. The responsibility always lies with the adults.

If you suspect that your child has experienced sexualized violence, the first thing to do is to remain calm and not take any rash action over your child's head. Decide together with your child what needs to be done. Seek advice and help from institutions or specialist advice centers that have experts on the subject of sexualized violence (see notes). Because your child now needs support, but so do you as parents.

GET SUPPORT

You can also visit a counseling center if you are concerned about the issue or have questions. Such centers sometimes also offer assertiveness training or other preventative courses for children and young people that you can recommend to your children. Or encourage the school your child attends to make regular use of preventive and sex education services offered by counseling centers and to distribute appropriate information material. Such offers and information are often also available for different target groups, for example in simplified language.



SEXUALIZED VIOLENCE

Studies show that sexualized violence most frequently occurs in the immediate social environment, for example within the family, among friends, in sports clubs or in the neighborhood. Only in less than a quarter of cases are the acts committed by external perpetrators. In the vast majority of cases, the perpetrators and the victims know each other.

MAKE YOUR CHILD AWARE OF SUPPORT OFFERS

Sexualized violence can happen anywhere, and perpetrators are not easily recognizable. In many cases, the manipulation of the environment and the concealment of the acts are specific characteristics of planned sexual assaults.

This often makes it more difficult for affected children and young people to turn to you or other people in their immediate environment for help with their experiences. Telling them early and repeatedly about anonymous help hotlines, such as Nummer gegen Kummer or the sexual abuse helpline (see notes), can be very helpful if the worst comes to the worst, combined with your “permission” for your child to seek help there themselves if necessary.

PREVENTING SEXUALIZED VIOLENCE

As soon as the time comes for your child to meet up with friends and stay out late in the evenings or go clubbing at the weekend, many parents start to feel alarmed: “Just watch yourself out there!”

Try not to be too strict when it comes to allowing them to go out in the evening or setting times for them to come home. Although custody rights give you extensive powers to intervene in your child's recreational activities until they reach adulthood, parents should also allow their children to lead an independent life.

Work with your child to come up with rules that are appropriate for their age and level of maturity. If you do not make any concessions to your child in the long term, you must expect them to create their own space without your knowledge.

MAKE CLEAR AGREEMENTS

Not only young people, but also their parents must be able to stand by agreed rules with a good feeling.

For example, when they go to clubs or parties, make clear arrangements about how and when they are to get there and back. Traveling together with a friend is safer than traveling alone. And perhaps you can arrange with other parents for one of you to pick your children up.

If your child chats a lot online, you should be alert if you find out that they want to meet up with an anonymous online acquaintance. If possible, talk to your child beforehand to make them aware of the risks of anonymous internet contacts. Don't be afraid to set clear boundaries and simply say “no,” even if your child begs and insists that other parents allow their children much more. Sometimes, unfortunately, as a parent, you can't avoid being a spoilsport. At the same time, however, make it clear under what conditions you can grant your child the freedom they want in the future.

It is all too understandable for parents to worry when their children start to spend more and more time on their own during puberty. Instead of hiding such feelings, you can speak openly and personally about your fears. But avoid statements like: “Don't make me worry about you!” Instead, speak from the “I” perspective, for example: “I sometimes worry a little that...” In return, have confidence in your child's promises. Despite a possible adolescent rebellious attitude, children generally don't want to worry their parents, and they behave responsibly more often than the parents might think.

And finally:

Puberty is an exciting time. It's wonderful when you can support your children during this time.

NOTES

BROCHURES AND WEBSITES FOR PARENTS AND THEIR CHILDREN

EDUCATIONAL GUIDE FOR PARENTS
FEDERAL INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC HEALTH (BIOG):

SUPPORTING CHILDREN WITH LOVE AND CARE

A guide to body image and curiosity about the body in childhood From age 1 until starting school

Article number: 13660500

LET'S TALK ABOUT IT...

A guide for parents on children's sexual development at elementary school age

Article number: 13660300

Sexuelle Vielfalt und Coming-out. (Sexual diversity and coming out) A guide for parents

This basic medium is aimed at parents and takes the coming out of their child as an opportunity to educate them about prejudices and help them accept their child's sexual orientation. Even though attitudes towards homosexuality and bisexuality may have become more liberal overall, coming out in a family context remains a sensitive developmental phase in which parents and other people close to the child may also need support.

Article number: 70110000

Online sein mit Maß und Spaß (Being online with moderation and fun)

A parents' guide to the correct use of digital media

Article number: 33215001

Brochure: Time for digital "Medien und Digitales – Elterninfo" (Media and digital – information for parents)

Brochure on media and the digital world in the everyday lives of children and young people

Article number: 11041410

Brochure: Time for movement "Bewegung und sport – Elterninfo" (Exercise and physical activity – information for parents)

Brochure on the importance of exercise and physical activity

Article number: 11041407

Brochure: Time to enjoy food "Essen und Trinken – Elterninfo" (Food and drink – information for parents)

Brochure on the importance of food and drink

Article number: 11041408

HPV Elternbroschüre (Brochure for parents on HPV)

This brochure provides parents with essential information about the HPV vaccination recommended by the STIKO (Standing Committee on Vaccination at the Robert Koch Institute) for girls and boys to protect against cervical cancer and other types of cancer.

Article number: 70392002

Trau dich! Ein Ratgeber für Eltern. (Gaining confidence. A guide for parents)

Information on sexual abuse for parents of 8- to 12-year-old children

Article number: 16100102

BROCHURES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE FEDERAL INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC HEALTH (BfÖG):

SEX&TIPPS – Pille, Kondom und Co. – Was ihr wissen solltet (SEX & TIPS – the pill, condoms and other contraception – what you should know)

Information about various contraceptives

Article number: 13066000

SEX&TIPPS – Jungenfragen (SEX & TIPS – boys' questions)

Information about body development and sexuality for boys and young men in puberty

Article number: 13066001

SEX&TIPPS – Mädchenfragen (SEX & TIPS – girls' questions)

Information about body development and sexuality

for girls and young women in puberty

Article number: 13066002

SEX&TIPPS – Körper und Gesundheit (SEX & TIPS – body and health)

Information about body development, sexuality, health and personal hygiene for adolescents in puberty

Article number: 13066003

SEX&TIPPS – Die erste Liebe (SEX & TIPS – first love)

Information about the confusing feelings of puberty and the experience of first love

Article number: 13066004

SEX&TIPPS – Beratung und Hilfe (SEX & TIPS – counseling and advice)

Information about help and advice for problems in love, relationships and sexuality, but also for other problems that can make life difficult for young people

Article number: 13066005

SEX&TIPPS – Was mir wichtig ist (SEX & TIPS – what's important to me)

Information about values and what is important in a relationship and in living together

Article number: 13066006

SEX&TIPPS – Gemeinsam verhüten (SEX & TIPS – using contraception together)

Information on contraception and the questions "Why do I need contraception anyway?"

And why is that any of the girls' and boys' business?"

Article number: 13066007

SEX&TIPPS – Hilfe bei Sex-Pannen (SEX & TIPS – when sex doesn't work out)

Information and tips if sex doesn't work out the way you want it to

Article number: 13066008

SEX&TIPPS – Das erste Mal (SEX & TIPS – the first time)

The first time – a very personal decision

Article number: 13066010

SEX&TIPPS – Sexuelle Orientierung (SEX & TIPS – sexual orientation)

The brochure "SEX&TIPPS – Wo die Liebe hinfällt" (SEX & TIPS – where love falls) addresses the questions of young people with regard to sexual orientation. What are sexual orientations? What does gay, lesbian, bi or straight mean? What is coming out? – These questions and more are addressed and answered in the brochure. Various role stereotypes about homosexuality and bisexuality are discussed and named as prejudices. It also names potential contacts on the subject of sexual orientation who can be approached with questions.

Article number: 13066011

SEX&TIPPS – Geschlechter: Mädchen? Junge? Oder? (SEX & TIPS – Genders: Girl? Boy? What else?)

The brochure "SEX&TIPPS – Geschlechter: Mädchen? Junge? Oder?" (Sex & Tips – Genders: Girl? Boy? What else?) addresses the questions of young people with regard to gender identities. What is gender? What gender roles are there? What do transgender and inter mean? – These questions and more are addressed and answered in the brochure. Various gender role stereotypes are discussed and named as prejudices. The three levels of gender are also described: the biological/medical, the social and the emotional level. The brochure also names potential contacts on the subject of gender identity who can be approached with questions.

Article number: 13066012

SEX&TIPPS – Meine Rechte (SEX & TIPS – my rights)

Sex – when, who with whom and in general?

Article number: 13066009

Wie gehts – wie stehts?**(How's it going – how's it hanging?) Interesting facts for boys and men**

Information about the male body, sexuality and contraception

Article number: 13030000

Aufregende Jahre – Jules Tagebuch (Exciting years – Jules' diary)

Information for girls aged 10-15 about puberty with its physical changes, emotional chaos, first love, contraception and friendship

Article number: 13040000

Mehr Wissen über sexuell übertragbare Infektionen**(More information about sexually transmitted diseases)**

This basic brochure answers all the important questions about sexually transmitted infections (STIs) in an easy-to-understand, everyday way. The back of the brochure also contains an overview of individual infections, each of which is explained in a clearly structured way based on their possible signs and consequences, their transmission routes and protection options, their examination and treatment.

Article number: 70430000

Kondome – Dein Schutz beim Sex (Condoms – your protection during sex)

This basic brochure is a compact compilation of all the important information about condom use – from the correct application to the right condom size. A condometer is also integrated, which serves as a guide for choosing the right condoms.

Article number: 70520000

Mehr Wissen über HIV und AIDS (More knowledge about HIV and AIDS)

This basic brochure contains essential and up-to-date information on the subject of HIV – from transmission pathways and protection options to counseling services and HIV testing. The brochure attaches great importance on reaching people on a personal level in order to raise awareness of the topic among readers and thus convey the current state of knowledge in an easily understandable way.

Article number: 70010000

Das Kondometer für Jugendliche – Welches Kondom passt dir?**(The condometer for teenagers – Which condom fits you?)**

Condom measuring tool to help young people choose the right condoms

Article number: 13352001

WEBSITES FOR PARENTS**www.bzkg.de**

The Federal Center for the Protection of Children and Young People in the Media (BzKJ) provides information on the benefits and risks of media consumption, tips for parents and recommended links.

www.schau-hin.info

An initiative of the Federal Ministry for Education, Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJS) and provides parents with practical guidance on media use and education.

www.jugendschutzlandesstellen.de

Here you will find a detailed list of addresses of several specialist and state offices for the protection of children and young people as well as the Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft Kinder- und Jugendschutz e. V. (federal union for the protection of children and minors). Many of these organizations offer information on the subject of the protection of children and young people on their homepages, which are linked to this website.

www.jugendschutz.net

This website is operated by the "Zentralstelle der Obersten Landesjugendbehörden für Jugendschutz in Mediendiensten" (central office of the supreme state youth authorities for the protection of minors in media services). Their task is to track down content on the internet that is harmful to minors and make it inaccessible to children and young people. Anyone who accidentally lands on websites that are harmful to minors with their children can report them to the authorities using a clickable form.

www.familienhandbuch.de

The multilingual online handbook from the State Institute for Early Childhood Education (IFP) offers everything parents need to know about education, health, support, school, work and leisure.

www.klicksafe.de

The site provides information on a wide range of relevant youth protection topics. It also provides tips, brochures and materials.

www.juuuport.de

The site provides information and advice on various online topics.

WEBSITES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

www.loveline.de

The youth portal of the Federal Institute of Public Health on love, sexuality and contraception. With a lexicon of more than 350 terms, answers to frequently asked questions and direct ordering options for brochures.

www.liebe-lore.de

Anonymous personal advice on love, sexuality, relationships and contraception by email or chat. An offer from the Lore-Agnes-Haus of AWO, BV Niederrhein e. V. in Essen for young people and adults.

www.lambda-online.de

The website of the federal association for gay and lesbian youth work. With links to the regional associations and a search function for local group offers.

www.profamilia.sextra.de

An email counseling service for teenagers and young adults from pro familia. With an archive of frequently asked questions (FAQs) and discussion forums. You have to register as a community member to make email inquiries.

https://brald.com/de/wissenschaft/medizin/sexualitaet

An email advice service for children and young people from the pro-familia regional association in Lower Saxony.

CONTACT ADDRESSES

**Information hotline of the Federal Institute of Public Health
on HIV and other sexually transmitted infections:**

0221/892031 (price according to the price list of the telephone provider for calls within the Cologne local network)

Monday to Thursday: 10 am to 10 pm

Friday to Sunday: 10 am to 6 pm

BlÖG's online advice service:

www.liebesleben.de

FURTHER SERVICES FROM BIÖG

Brochures and media are available from BIÖG

by quoting the Article number:

BIÖG, 50819 Cologne

by fax: 0221/8992-257

by email: bestellung@bioeg.de

or www.bioeg.de

www.sexualaufklaerung.de or www.loveline.de

BIÖG websites for young people:

www.loveline.de (sexuality, love and contraception)

www.liebesleben.de (HIV and STIs)

www.drugcom.de (addiction and drugs)

www.rauch-frei.info (smoking and quitting)

COUNSELING SERVICES FOR PARENTS

If you have further questions, need more information or have a specific problem, parents (or their children) can get advice from experts by phone, email or in person. The following nationwide associations offer this option at their local counseling centers or can refer you:

Arbeiterwohlfahrt Bundesverband e. V.

Heinrich-Albertz-Haus

Blücherstraße 62/63, 10961 Berlin, tel.: 030/26309-0

www.awo.org

Deutscher Caritasverband e. V.

Karlstraße 40, 79104 Freiburg, tel.: 0761/200-0

www.caritas.de

Der Paritätische

General association

Oranienburger Straße 13–14, 10178 Berlin, tel.: 030/24636-0,

www.der-paritaetische.de

Diakonie Deutschland – Evangelischer Bundesverband

Caroline-Michaelis-Straße 1, 10115 Berlin, tel.: 030/65211-0

www.diakonie.de

donum vitae e. V.

Thomas-Mann-Straße 4, 53111 Bonn, tel.: 0228/369488-0

www.donumvitae.org

**pro familia – Deutsche Gesellschaft für Familienplanung,
Sexualpädagogik und Sexualberatung e. V.**

Federal association

Mainzer Landstraße 250–254, 60326 Frankfurt/M., tel.: 069/2695779-0

www.profamilia.de

Sozialdienst Katholischer Frauen Zentrale e. V.

Agnes-Neuhaus-Straße 5, 44135 Dortmund, tel.: 0231/557026-0

www.skf-zentrale.de

Municipal or district health offices also often offer advice on sexuality, sex education and sexually transmitted infections. Bundeskonferenz für Erziehungsberatung e. V. offers anonymous email counseling, moderated discussion forums and a chat especially for parents:

www.bke-beratung.de

Bundesverband Trans* e. V.

Prinzregentenstraße 84, 10717 Berlin

Tel.: 030/23949896

www.bundesverband-trans.de**LSVD+ – Verband Queere Vielfalt e. V.**

Rheingasse 6

50676 Cologne

Tel.: 0220/925961-0

www.lsvd.de**Intergeschlechtliche Menschen e. V.**

Slebuschstieg 6, 20537 Hamburg, tel.: 0170-7090385

www.im-ev.de**IVIM – OII Germany**

Office partnership

Naunynstr. 30, 10997 Berlin

www.oii germany.org

TELEPHONE, CHAT AND EMAIL ADVICE FOR CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND PARENTS

NUMMER GEGEN KUMMER

Nummer gegen Kummer is a telephone helpline and counseling service for children, young people and parents.

Phone number for children and young people

Tel.: 116111 (free nationwide), Mondays to Saturdays 2-8 pm,

"Jugendliche beraten Jugendliche" (young people advising young people), Saturdays 2-8

pm; email advice at

www.nummergegenkummer.de**Phone number for parents 0800/1110550**

Mondays to Fridays – 9 am to 5 pm, Tuesdays and Thursdays also until 7 pm, free of charge nationwide

www.nummergegenkummer.de

Around the clock, free of charge nationwide

<http://sexedu.eduskills.plus>

Is a sex education app for children. The topics are adapted for children at different stages of development. There is an accompanying handbook for parents, which is also available free of charge.

POINTS OF CONTACT REGARDING SEXUAL ABUSE OR SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Federal Ministry for Education, Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMBFSFJ)

www.bmbfsfj.bund.de/bmbfsfj/themen/kinder-und-jugend/kinder-und-jugendschutz

Independent commissioner for the investigation of child sexual abuse

www.beauftragter-missbrauch.de

www.dgfpi.de

Deutsche Gesellschaft für Prävention und Intervention bei Kindesmisshandlung, -vernachlässigung und sexualisierter Gewalt e. V. (German society for the prevention of and intervention in cases of child abuse, neglect and sexual violence)

Under the page www.jugendschutzlandesstellen.de you will find a list of the real and virtual addresses of several specialist and state offices for the protection of children and young people as well as the Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft Kinder- und Jugendschutz e. V. (federal union for the protection of children and minors). Many of these organizations offer information on the subject of child and youth protection on their websites.

Nationally known institutions are:

Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft Kinder- und Jugendschutz e. V. (BAJ)

Mühlendamm 3, 10178 Berlin, tel.: 030/40040300

Email: info@bag-jugendschutz.de

www.bag-jugendschutz.de

Deutscher Kinderschutzbund Bundesverband e. V.

Federal office

Schöneberger Straße 15, 10963 Berlin

Tel.: 030/214809-0

<https://kinderschutzbund.de>

Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft der Kinderschutz-Zentren, Federal office

Bonner Straße 1, 50968 Cologne

Tel.: 0221/569753, fax: 0221/5697550

www.kinderschutz-zentren.org

Sexual abuse helpline

Free and anonymous service for victims of sexual violence, for relatives, persons in the immediate circle, for professionals and all interested parties

Tel.: 0800/2255530

www.hilfe-portal-missbrauch.de/startseite

Support for people who have experienced sexual violence in their childhood and adolescence, as well as for relatives, professionals and anyone with questions or concerns about a child – in person, online or by phone.

www.wildwasser.de

Association against sexual abuse

www.zartbitter.de

Contact point against sexual abuse of girls and boys, Cologne

www.nina-info.de

N.I.N.A. is the national infoline, network and point of contact for sexual violence against girls and boys

Sexual abuse helpline: 0800/2255530

www.bundeskoordinierung.de

Federal Coordination of Specialized Advice Against Sexual Violence in Childhood and Youth (BKSF)

Political representation and information and service points for the specialized advisory centers working against sexual violence in childhood and youth

Dunkelziffer e. V.

Initial counseling and telephone help for boys and girls, parents

and caregivers: 040/421070010

Mondays, Thursdays and Fridays 10 am – 1 pm, Tuesdays and Wednesdays 2 pm – 4 pm

www.dunkelziffer.de

TELEPHONE, CHAT AND EMAIL ADVICE FOR CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND PARENTS REGARDING SEXUAL VIOLENCE

www.schreib-ollie.de

Online counseling regarding sexual abuse and part of the sexual abuse helpline offering. It is a service offered by N.I.N.A. e. V. – sponsored by the Independent Commissioner Against Child Sexual Abuse.

www.unddu-portal.de/de

The platform of Innocence in Danger e. V. is aimed at young people and relates to sexual violence among young people. The platform provides knowledge and seeks to strengthen skills. It is also possible for users to seek help directly.

