

**Tips and Conversation Starters for Parents:
Life Begins: Sex & Relationships
Ages 10-14**

General Tips for Talking to Your Child About Sex

- Remain calm and comfortable. Doing some research can help conversations feel more natural.
- Look for teachable moments when watching TV, news stories, or someone you know is having a baby.
- This conversation is on-going. It is not just one and done.
- Talk in a private, comfortable place. The car is often a good place because you and your child do not need to make eye contact.
- Keep the lines of communication open before and after the discussions.
- Leave the conversation with both parties knowing that the conversation will continue.
- Avoid overreacting or knee-jerk reactions. That will tend to discourage your child from coming to you.
- Remember if they don't hear it from you, they will from someone else.
- Have resources (i.e., books) available for them.

Conversation Starters

- "The stakes are high when it comes to sex. Where do you go to get your questions answered about really personal topics?"
- When teachable moments arise, offer an open-ended question. (i.e., What do you know about how pregnancy happens? Or What would you do if someone you were dating started acting like the character in the TV show? Or, do you know anyone that this happened to?)
- To get at issues such as sexting, you might ask, "What do you think it means to be respectful on social media or when texting?"
- To talk about consent, try analogies or scenarios – If your cat does not want you to pet it, do you? If you want to have a few of someone else's French fries, do you just take them off their plate or do you ask? If they say yes, does that mean that you can just take the fries anytime or do you also need to ask the next time?
- Empower your child to be able to evaluate risks and make good decisions. Help your child to understand that they have a gut feeling, an inner voice, and they can and should listen to it.