



Consent and your teen

What is consent?

Consent is giving permission for something to happen, like an agreement to do something. When teens learn about and understand consent, it helps them develop better relationships with family, friends, peers, and romantic partners.

Consent is an ongoing conversation. This means that if you say yes to something in one moment, and then change your mind and say no in the next moment, your new decision should be respected. Good communication skills can help teens express their boundaries,

and speak up when they're uncomfortable, and respect the response they get when asking for consent.

Sexual consent is when both people agree to a sexual activity and understand what they are agreeing to. Consent is the foundation for sexual relationships and must be asked for and given for every sexual activity, every time.

For more information on how to communicate consent go to: [About sexual violence: Consent](#).

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Talking about consent with your teen

Talk with your teen about consent to keep them safe, even if it might feel awkward. It's important.

Here are some topics to cover together:

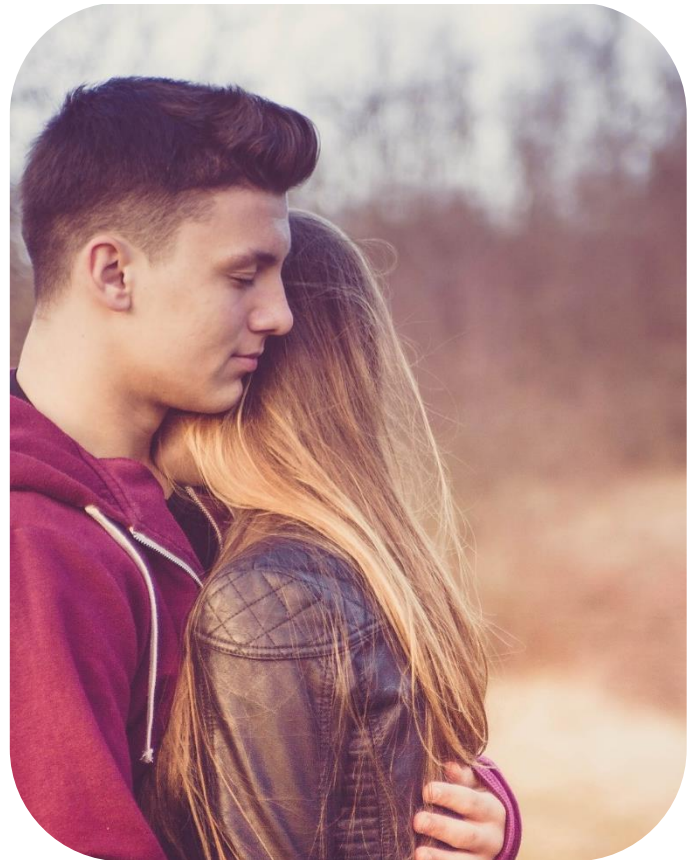
- Personal boundaries. Get your teen thinking about times when they need to pay attention to the boundaries other people set.
- Sexual consent. Help your teen understand what it means to ask for consent and why it's important to respect the answer.
- Talk about how coercion, pressure, harassment, and manipulation are sexual assault. Help your teen understand the legal, social and emotional consequences of sexual assault. For more information go to: [About sexual violence - Coercion](#).

Remind your teen that they have a voice and that you will always listen to them. Encourage them to talk to you if they are ever unsure about consent, or if something happened to them without their consent.

[Understanding consent](#) is a video from [TeachingSexualHealth.ca](#) that makes consent easy to relate to and understand. Watch together and use it to kick-start family conversations.

Online safety and consent

Your teen's life online likely matters to them just as much as their life offline. Helping teens understand and navigate the virtual world is important for their safety, privacy, and media literacy.



Consent is essential for virtual activities like sexting, an online form of sexual activity. Sexting involves sending or receiving sexual photos, messages or videos through technology like texts, email, or social media apps (like snapchat). Although some people use consensual sexts to express their intimacy, sexting does come with risks. Here are some talking points to help you support your teen:

- Always think before you send. You are in control of what you choose to send—it is always your choice.
- Be kind and show respect for others. Treat people as you would treat them face-to-face.

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- Never assume that messages and pictures will stay private, and never forward messages or pictures to other people. In many cases, sharing sexual materials is against the law. For more on this visit the [TeachingSexualHealth.ca](https://www.teachingsexualhealth.ca) parent portal on [sexting](#).
- You have the right to say no if something feels uncomfortable. Reach out to a trusting adult—like a teacher, coach, Elder or faith leader—if you need help.
- Consider the consequences of your actions. Ask yourself who could see this message or image in the future and decide whether you're comfortable with the answer.

For more information about sexting and what to do if an image of your teen has been shared without consent go to [Sex and sextortion: What is it and how to deal with it](#) from the Government of Canada.

To learn more about how to keep your teen safe online, go to: [ProtectKidsOnline.ca](https://www.protectkids.ca)

Responding to sexual assault

Sex and sexual activity without consent is sexual assault. If your teen tells you they have been sexually assaulted, it is important to:

- Stay calm and listen. Give them your full attention and tell them you believe them.
- Be compassionate and tell them that it is not their fault. Let them know that they did not deserve what happened to them.
- Reach out for support. For a list of sexual health services and supports in Alberta, go to the [TeachingSexualHealth.ca parent resources page](https://www.teachingsexualhealth.ca/parent-resources).

Talking to your teen about consent helps to protect them while also helping them develop important skills. Being open about wishes and boundaries can be a fun, positive, and fulfilling part of any relationship, including friendships and romantic and sexual relationships.

For additional support and resources related to consent go to:

- [TeachingSexualHealth.ca](https://www.teachingsexualhealth.ca)
 - [Understanding consent](#)
 - [Technology and media](#)
- [Understanding consent for sex: What it means for you](#)
- [Teaching older children and teens about consent](#)
- [Sexual violence prevention – Sexual consent](#)