

AGES 2 TO 5

"How did I come out of your tummy?"

"Can I marry my brother?"

"Why haven't you got a willy?"

Be honest and age-appropriate. Beginning the conversation early and often will start a close parent-child connection and an easy relationship with the truth.

THE FACTS

Your child is learning at the speed of light!

- The brain is at its most plastic (able to change) at age 2 or 3
- The brain at this age has up to twice as many synapses as it will in adulthood

That makes the early years the most impressionable time in a child's life. As you might have noticed, children at this age take everything in - and then they 'use it or lose it'.

It's around now that 'theory of mind' (understanding about different points of view) usually develops. This is the beginning of a child's approach to relationships.

TALKING TO CHILDREN AGED 2 TO 5

Top tips

1

Have conversations about sex, love and relationships **early and often**. Just as with anything else, children learn by repetition.

2

The earlier you use **correct words for body parts** - like penis and vulva - the more normal this will be for your child. It's protective. Secrecy and shame often fuel unwanted attitudes and behaviour.

3

If you talk openly early on and continue, that openness will spiral through your child's life. **Start out small, basic and simplistic - you'll end up adding detail along the way**. Think of it like a lens that starts out blurry and comes into focus over time.

4

Make your point before your child gets bored. Active young children often give you only a small window of time to get your message across!

Top phrases

"Was that a good touch or a bad touch?"

"You're in my personal space bubble"

"Your body is amazing. It can..."

"Thank you for asking. I like your questions."

MORE HELP WITH AGES 2 TO 5

1. "What's healthy, what's not" | HEALTHYCHILDREN.ORG

Learn what's "normal", red-flag behaviour and body safety teaching tips from this set of lists sourced by the American academy of Pediatricians."

[Go to HealthyChildren.org >](http://HealthyChildren.org)

2. The PANTS Rule | NSPCC (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children)

Keep your young child safe from unwanted touch. Learn the PANTS acronym, get the guide or even launch the free Amazon Alexa Skill.

[Go to PANTS >](http://PANTS)

3. [Preschool](http://Planned Parenthood) | [PLANNED PARENTHOOD](http://Planned Parenthood)

This American sex education and sexual health nonprofit with a global reach has a dedicated preschoolers section for parents. This Irish resource has a similar target group.

[Go to Planned Parenthood >](http://Planned Parenthood)