



Curve Curve

A touchy subject?

Why discuss breast health with your teenager? Some parents are terrific at talking to their children about anything and everything, but plenty of us struggle with tricky or sensitive topics. Broaching the subject of breast health won't be easy for everyone, but it's very important to discuss - after all, by doing so, you are helping your teenagers develop habits to keep them healthy for life.

A bit about breast development

To help you know what to say to your teenagers (both girls and boys), it's good to be informed about breast development. Below, you'll find some quick facts, which may help when you talk to your teenager.

- Your daughter's breasts will usually start to develop around age 9 to 11, but it's quite normal for them to start earlier or later than this.
- Everyone's breasts develop at different rates.
- Breasts are usually fully developed by the age of 17.
- When your daughter's breasts start to develop a small bump, called a breast bud, grows under the areola and the nipple. As the breast buds grow, your daughter may notice tingling, aching or itching in the chest and the nipples may swell or become tender. This is all quite normal.
- Your daughter's breasts will get bigger and rounder as the fatty tissue and milk-producing glands inside the breasts continue to grow. The areola also gets bigger and darker and the nipples may stick out.
- Some breasts may develop asymmetrically (unevenly). While a difference in size may be obvious to your daughter, others won't notice. Be warned, creams, supplements, exercise or diet won't have any impact on evening out the breasts! But time mostly evens things out.
- 65 per cent of boys will have some breast tissue at some time. If your son develops breasts, there is nothing to worry about. He is not turning into a girl. He may notice a slight swelling under the nipples, and the area may feel sore or tender. But while the swelling may last through puberty, his breasts will not grow any bigger.

It's good for your teenagers to get to know their breasts while and after they develop, as this way they'll know when something changes. If your daughter usually gets lumpy breasts before a period this is nothing to worry about - it is normal for her.

Conversation Tips

Timing your conversation

- It's important that you pick the time and place for these conversations. Pick your moment carefully; avoid talking when your teenager is "in a mood", a better time will present itself.
- Give yourself enough time to talk. If you're running late and you only have five minutes, put the conversation off until another time.
- If your child is pre-occupied getting ready for a party, sport or trying to study, pick another time.
- Look for natural opportunities to have these conversations.

Where to have the chat

- If you know your teenager will be embarrassed by a particular topic, have the conversation with them when there's no one around. Good places for these conversations are:
- In the car. From time to time, you'll probably drop them off or pick them up to or from school, a social event or school sport.
- Sitting around the kitchen table.
- At the park/cafe or at a place that you regularly do something together.

Using natural triggers

Look out for natural triggers to start the conversation:

- When you're watching TV
- If you see something on the internet
- Reading magazines/newspapers together
- Your teenager may start the conversation, take this opportunity and use it
- Be aware of conversations that can lead to breast awareness and steer the conversation in that direction.

Are you a parent?

Conversation starters

- ... Have you learnt about breast development at school?
- ... Are any/many of the girls in your class wearing bras?
- ... How do you feel about getting/ wearing a bra?
- ... We should think about going to get you fitted for a bra, let's go shopping
- ... Have you heard about breast awareness and what it means?
- ... Do you know of the McGrath Foundation? I hear they have a resource for high schools.



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