

TALKING ABOUT SEXUAL HEALTH

A TOOL FOR YOUTH WORKERS

Talking about sex, sexuality and sexual health with young people is an important area of work for youth workers. It is not about having all the answers, but understanding young people's thoughts, concerns, challenges and strengths, and supporting them to make informed choices about their health and well-being.

Youth workers are trusted sources of sexual health information for young people.

Look for opportunities to start a conversation or build on what young people are already asking or talking about.

Young people want you to start the conversation:

- It's not complicated – it can be brief!
- It doesn't have to be embarrassing – it's not about you! It's about helping the young people who trust you to have these conversations.
- Don't know the answers? That's OK; you don't have to be an expert!
- Use your own language and be authentic.

PERMISSION

Ask permission – it shows respect and helps young people feel safe.

"Can I talk with you about relationships and sexual health?"

"A lot of young people have questions about relationships, and sexual health – I'm always here if you need to chat."

"Do you have anything on your mind you'd like to talk about now?"

OPEN THE CONVERSATION

Find out what they already know. Let the young person lead the conversation.

"What do you already know about...?" (e.g. sexual health/condoms/STIs/going on a date)

"Have you seen these new resources about relationships and sexual health that we have in the centre? What did you think of them?"

INFORMATION

Extend on existing knowledge and correct any misconceptions. Give the young person some relevant information to address concerns and keep the conversation going.

"It's important to always use condoms with a new sexual partner, and to have regular sexual health checks."

"Remember to take condoms with you when going on a date, whether or not you think you might need them."

CHECK IN

Acknowledge what they have to say and check their understanding.

"What are your thoughts about that?"

"Do you know where you can get condoms?"

RESOURCES

Provide the young person with more information and access to resources.

"Let's have a look at some resources together. Have you seen the Play Safe website?"

"Can I show you this video about what it's like to go to a sexual health clinic?"

REFERRAL

Explore ways to address any barriers to accessing sexual health services (i.e. GPs and sexual health clinics) with the young person, and introduce them to a service that is right for them.

"There are lots of places you can get information and help...can I show you some options?"

"Here are some services other young people have found useful."

Confidentiality

Ensuring confidentiality allows young people to feel more comfortable when discussing issues and sharing information of a sensitive nature. Make sure young people know about the confidentiality policies of your service by:

- Having posters visibly displayed.
- Talking openly about confidentiality.
- Providing a private space to chat.

Facilitating referral

Consider assisting the young person with booking an appointment.

- "Do you have a doctor you've seen before? How would you feel about talking with your doctor about what we've spoke about?"
- "Would you like me to help you make an appointment?"
- "Lots of places provide free sexual health checks for young people. It's OK to ask if there's a cost before making an appointment."
- "Do you have your own Medicare card?"
Note: Young people can get their own Medicare card from the age of 15: www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/forms/3170
- "Did you know young people can generally access health services confidentially from age 14?"

For local service information contact the Sexual Health Infolink or Family Planning NSW Talkline.

My local services

Referral information

Play Safe	www.playsafe.health.nsw.gov.au For information about STIs and sexual health checks.
Body Talk	www.bodytalk.org.au For information about puberty, relationships, contraception and STIs.
ReachOut.com	www.reachout.com.au For information and fact sheets for young people.
Twenty10	www.twenty10.org.au For information to support young people of diverse sexualities, sexes and genders.
ACON	www.acon.org.au For same sex attracted, intersex and gender diverse health information.
Condom Credit Card (CCC)	www.bodytalk.org.au/cc A friendly, confidential way for young people to get FREE condoms from services across NSW.
Sexual Health Infolink	1800 451 624 Free and confidential sexual health support and information. Available Mon - Fri 9am-5.30pm
Family Planning NSW Talkline	1300 658 886 Free and confidential reproductive and sexual health support and information. Available Mon-Fri 8:30am – 5pm or by email via the Family Planning NSW website: www.fpnsw.org.au/talkline
Video about STI testing	Getting a sexual health check: www.bodytalk.org.au/keeping-an-eye-on-stis/sexual-healthchecks/

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