

# CONSENT

## A NWAC Fact Sheet For Parents and Caregivers of Indigenous Youth



**You can never start talking about consent when a child may be too young. Honest, age-appropriate, and shame-free discussion around consent helps your child develop a well-rounded understanding of their rights, and their health overall.**

A good understanding of consent is just one piece of the puzzle in educating youth about **sexual and reproductive health**, but it can be a **tough conversation to start**. Some parents may not feel they have a good enough understanding of the topic to pass on to their kids. Some families might have their own trauma that makes it **difficult to broach this topic**. But such a **conversation is necessary**.



### TIPS FOR TALKING TO YOUNGER CHILDREN

**Use the proper terms for their body parts.** Anatomical terms like vagina, penis, breasts, etc., are not dirty words and knowing the right language will help them communicate clearly about their bodies. Avoiding a word creates shame, and we never want children to feel like they must hide something about their body.

**Promote bodily autonomy at home.** For example, if you're having a tickle fight and your child laughs and says "stop!", it's important to stop right away. This will teach them that their boundaries should always be respected and, as they grow, they will expect them to be.

**Teach them to not keep secrets.** This can be done by creating an environment at home where they feel safe and heard, and where their instincts are honoured. Children are protected when they know that an adult should never ask them to keep a secret.

**Teach children to trust themselves.** Especially for Indigenous kids, self-determination means that they have the right to decide what they are comfortable with. Empowering children to trust their instincts will help them develop a healthy and safe relationship with their body and sexuality as they age.



### TIPS FOR TALKING TO TWEENS AND TEENS

**Let them know that consent is an ongoing process.** Indigenous parents know that free, prior, and informed consent is essential and must be obtained without coercion or manipulation. Just because you might have said 'yes' before doesn't mean that you can't change your mind.



### TEACH THEM THE THREE STEPS TO CONSENT:

- 1) **ASK** – "Do you want me to kiss you?"; "How far do you want to go?"; "Is this okay?"
- 2) **LISTEN** – The absence of a no doesn't mean it's a yes.
- 3) **RESPECT** – If you don't receive a clear 'yes,' things should stop there.

**Talk about social media and technology.** Kids these days are online more than ever. Refer to our online safety fact sheet for tips on how to protect your tech-savvy kids.

Have discussions **free from shame and embarrassment about preventing and testing for sexually transmitted and blood-borne infections (STBBIs)**. It's important to **remove the shame** from these discussions, so youth know they can talk to their parents if something is wrong. If someone is sexually active, regular **STBBI testing** is an essential part of **protecting their sexual and reproductive health**.

Check out [www.stbbi.nwac.ca](http://www.stbbi.nwac.ca) for additional fact sheets and more!

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