About sexual feelings

As you reach puberty, there are lots of changes happening in your body that may affect your daily lives, your feelings, your relationships with others and how you see yourself. Life can be pretty confusing as you deal with these changes but it can also be exciting and wonderful. The sex hormones your body is producing may cause you to have sexual feelings. Sometimes they make you feel sexy. You may begin to explore parts of your body that give you these feelings when you touch them, especially the genital area.

Sexual feelings can make you want to be really close to someone who attracts you. Your body may feel excited and shivery or warm and tingly whenever you think about that person.

As you reach puberty it is normal for you to start having strong feelings towards others. It may be exciting to think about having a boyfriend or girlfriend.

Sometimes you may have a crush on someone. ‘Crushes’ are when you find that you are thinking about someone most of your time and you may even believe that you are ‘in love’ with him or her.

About crushes

A crush is a word which describes how we feel about someone we really like.

> Boys and girls have 'crushes'.
> You may have a crush on someone you know of the same or opposite sex as yourself.
> You may feel really strongly about a movie star or pop star.
> It may be someone in your class or school.
> It may be someone in your family.
> It may even be a teacher.

It is quite normal for kids to have crushes. It is part of growing up and learning about your feelings. Having a crush on someone is a lot like the first time you are in love. You may want to look at, be with and think about the person you have a crush on a lot of the time, and feel shy or embarrassed when you see her or him.

Thinking about your own body, the way it is changing and the many thoughts and feelings you are having during puberty can make you ‘feel sexy’. Learning how to manage these sexual feelings isn’t easy; it is all part of growing up.

Sexual contact

If you feel sexually attracted to another person there are different ways of expressing this.

You may want to tell the person that you like him or her. You may want to show your feelings by cuddling, holding hands and touching - these are all ways of showing someone that you think they are really special.
As the relationship develops between a male and a female they may feel so strongly attracted to each other that they feel like they want to be part of each other. Their loving, cuddling and touching may lead to sexual intercourse when the man puts his penis inside the woman's vagina.

When people are old enough it is possible that sexual intercourse can lead to the female becoming pregnant. People also like to have sexual intercourse because it is a way of expressing their love for each other and it makes them feel good.

People often talk about sexual intercourse as ‘making love’.

What you should know about sexual intercourse

> Sexual intercourse is sharing your body with someone.

> It's sensible to wait until you are old enough and responsible enough to handle the demands of a more complicated relationship.

> Everyone has the right to say no to any kind of sexual touching. (See our topic Keeping yourself safe from child abuse)

> A girl or woman can become pregnant after sexual intercourse. There are ways to stop this happening called ‘contraception’ (say, con-tra sep-shon) if the couple is not ready for the responsibilities of having a child.

> Infections can be passed from one person to another during sex.

Some of these infections, called sexually transmitted infections (STI's), can be treated, and others, like HIV/AIDS, can cause death.

Many young people choose to stay celibate (sel-i-bet). This means not to have sexual intercourse until they are absolutely sure that they have found the right partner to share their life.

They believe that sexual intercourse is SO special it should only be shared with the special person they have chosen.

Note: In South Australia it is against the law to have sexual intercourse when you are under 17 years old. These laws are to protect young people from getting hurt by situations that they aren't old enough or experienced enough to manage.

Dr Kate says

"If you are feeling confused or unhappy about your feelings then talk to mum or a trusted adult. Sometimes friends are not the best people to ask as they may not have the right information to answer your questions and you could become more confused."

What kids say

My crush
I had a crush when I started kindy. I met him in my first year. Then I became his girl friend. We went on for 3 years. I really liked him because he was sweet, funny, good looking and caring. I miss him very much.
I've had a crush on lots of boys.
I thought they were cute.
I saw them every day.
Then the crush went away.

I had a crush on my friend's sister. I used to go all red when I saw her. I didn't want anyone to know because they would tease me.

What about you? Have you ever had a crush on someone?