

### ***What can I do to ensure that I, or my child, receives accurate information about sexuality and dating?***

Children with an autism spectrum disorder (ASD) enter puberty and experience the same physical, social and emotional changes as their typically developing peers. Often the normal physical changes associated with puberty follow a typical timeline, however social and emotional development may be different or delayed, and many adolescents with ASD even greater challenges in these areas. Individuals may also have sensory issues (e.g., type of touch, sounds) that affects their ability to engage in social relationships. By starting with learning how to make and keep friends, individuals are taking an important first step in forming healthy intimate relationships. By providing sexual education that meets yours, or your child's (appropriate for their level of understanding) needs, you or they will be better prepared for dating and sexual relationships and less vulnerable to abuse and exploitation.

- Don't be afraid to ask questions.
- Answer your child's questions honestly.
- Use words that they understand and that suit their developmental level.
- Be prepared to start conversations about sexuality as some children will not ask on their own.
- Consider and discuss your values, beliefs and concerns about sex and dating.
- Help your child to develop the social skills needed to develop healthy relationships. See the Tip Sheet, "Social Skills."

Individuals with ASD need to understand the following information:

- The correct names for genitalia.
- Understanding of menstruation, masturbation, sexual intercourse, birth control, and how to prevent sexually transmitted infections.
- The concept of private (e.g. the bedroom and bathroom) versus public talk and behavior.
- The difference between good touch and bad touch.
- Understanding of the conditions when and where someone can touch private parts (parent, significant other, doctor, etc.)

## RESOURCES

The Resource Centre (a Sinneave Family Foundation initiative) does not endorse or guarantee the exhaustive, complete, accurate or up-to-date nature of information provided and does not assume any risk for the outcome of information or referrals provided.

### **Alberta Health Services**

Provides options for people with ASD to meet as a group, or individually, with a facilitator from the Sexual and Reproductive Health Program. Contact Heather Cobb, Sexual Health Promotion Facilitator.

**Phone:** 403.955.4642  
**Email:** [hmhc@albertahealthservices.ca](mailto:hmhc@albertahealthservices.ca)  
**Website:** [hmhc.ca/more/1704/1704.html](http://hmhc.ca/more/1704/1704.html)

### **Talking About Sexuality in Canadian Communities**

Providing practical tools and strategies to work with high risk youth and youth with disabilities.

**Website:** [tasccalberta.com](http://tasccalberta.com)

### **Alberta Health Services - Teaching Sexual Health**

This website provides information for teachers, educators, and parents for teaching sexual health to students of all abilities.

**Address:** 10101 Southport Rd. S.W.Calgary, Alberta T2W 3N2

**Website:** [teachingsexualhealth.ca](http://teachingsexualhealth.ca)

### **Calgary Communities Against Sexual Abuse (CCASA)**

CCASA provides sexual abuse education, promotes research and advocacy, and provides crisis intervention and counselling.

**Phone:** 403.237.5888 (Support and Information)

**Address:** Northland Building, 700, 910 – 7th Avenue SW, Calgary, AB T2P 3N8

**Email:** [info@calgarycasa.com](mailto:info@calgarycasa.com)

**Website:** [calgarycasa.com](http://calgarycasa.com)

### **Centre for Sexuality**

Offers services for people with developmental disabilities, both individually, as well as in a group. They offer a maximum of 6 one-on-one sessions where counsellors discuss sexuality and sexual health. Parents or support workers are encouraged to attend the session so they can reinforce and build on what was learned and discussed in the session. All of their counselling services are free and confidential – including safe sex counselling, sexual health support, developmental disability support, and more. Phone consultations are also available if you are unable to access services in person.

**Phone:** 403.283.5580

**Address:** 700, 1509 Centre Street SW Calgary, Alberta T2G 2E6

**Email:** [generalmail@centreforsexuality.ca](mailto:generalmail@centreforsexuality.ca)

**Website:** [centreforsexuality.ca/programs-workshops/people-developmental-disabilities/](http://centreforsexuality.ca/programs-workshops/people-developmental-disabilities/)

### **Centre for Parent Information and Resources: Sexuality Education for Students with Disabilities**

A resource page that addresses the development of sexuality for students with disabilities.

**Website:** [parentcenterhub.org/sexed/](http://parentcenterhub.org/sexed/)

### **Program for the Enrichment and Education of Relational Skills (PEERS)**

PEERS® for Young Adults (YA) is 16-week social skills program for individuals with social challenges. It was originally developed by Dr. Elizabeth Laugeson at UCLA. It is an evidence-based program for adolescents and young adults with ASD (18-30 years of age). It is currently being offered by the Autism Spectrum Education, Research, and Training group at the University of Calgary.

**Email:** [peers@ucalgary.ca](mailto:peers@ucalgary.ca)

**Website:** [ucalgary.ca/asert/intervention](http://ucalgary.ca/asert/intervention)

**Website:** [semel.ucla.edu/peers](http://semel.ucla.edu/peers)

### **Queerability**

Queerability is an LGBTQ and disability rights advocacy organization run by, and for, LGBTQ people with disabilities.

**Website:** [queerability.tumblr.com/](https://queerability.tumblr.com/)

**Sexuality and Disability Guide for Parents:** <https://teachingsexualhealth.ca/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/Sexual-and-Development-Disability-Guide-2016.pdf>

### **Sex Ed for Self-Advocates**

OAR's new online resource focused on sexuality and sex education for teens and emerging adults on the autism spectrum. Users can focus on sections they are interested in or navigate through the guide from beginning to end. While the guide was written for self-advocates age 15 and up, it also contains tips and lists of additional helpful resources for parents and educators of those on the spectrum.

**Website:** <https://researchautism.org/sex-ed-guide/>

### **SEX & U**

This website is an initiative of The Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. It provides accurate, credible, and up-to-date information and education on topics related to sexual and reproductive health; for example, your body, sexual activity, contraception, LGBTQ+, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), pregnancy, and consent.

**Website:** [sexandu.ca](http://sexandu.ca)

### **Wise Guyz**

This program is offered by the Calgary Sexual Health Centre. It is focused around educating young men about healthy sexuality and relationships.

**Website:** [centreforsexuality.ca/programs-workshops/wiseguyz/](http://centreforsexuality.ca/programs-workshops/wiseguyz/)

Last Updated June 2019