

# Sex Education for Kids

EXPERTS SAY sex education should be given to children as young as five years old...

in an attempt to combat teenage pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections, as well as to protect against paedophiles and sexual predators.

Counsellor Lorna Eaton believes that parents are leaving the "sex message" so late that many youngsters are being exposed to unnecessary risks.

"As early as the primary level, children should be told about sex, because that is the time they meet persons of different backgrounds. Some are highly exposed and can very well influence others," Eaton tells The Sunday Gleaner. "Parents need to lay the groundwork to empower children to make the right decisions so that they can turn things down."

Eaton cautions parents to desist from being deceptive with children when they become curious about sexually related matters.

"Children will ask sexual questions, but don't lie to them, because if they are initiating that type of discussion, then it's the right time to let them know. But put it in words that they will understand," Eaton advises.

She says teaching infants about sex demands a gentle, continuous flow of information. As children grow, persons can continue the education by adding more information gradually until they understand the subject well.

## Teaching sexuality

Expressing similar views, Professor Maureen Samms-Vaughan, chairman of the Early Childhood Commission, advises parents that sex education is not about sexual intercourse - it is really teaching children about sexuality.

She says the moment children start to know the difference in genders, they are beginning sex education.

"At that stage, they begin to identify their body parts and they learn that rubbing their genitalia gives them some pleasurable feelings, so we should teach them what is socially acceptable behaviour," Samms-Vaughan says.

She adds that children should be educated from early so that they would not allow persons to touch them inappropriately.