

# Sex education in malaysia

[Health & Medicine](#), [Sex](#)



Sex affects all aspects of human life. Sexual desires, feelings and activities extend from childhood through adolescence, adulthood and old age. As such, it is only rational to treat sex as an integral and positive facet of our lives. However, (most) Malaysians have a tendency to behave as if only a small number of politicians have sex in the nation. Sex is still a taboo topic and some tend to make a huge fuss whenever the subject is brought up for an intellectual discussion. Are we aware that such conservative attitudes cost us severely?

Malaysia's modernisation has resulted in increased sexual exposure among us, especially the teenagers. No matter how hard the authorities try, the youths can inevitably access sexual information through the mass media such as the internet. The question is: Are the people getting the right information? Movie scenes that portray a person's NO as an indirect YES to sex are not teaching us the real meaning of consent. Unethical and violent pornography is not going to educate us that it is barbaric to treat a fellow human being as a mere sex object or unprotected sex can be a detriment to our well-being.

What else then can provide us with the accurate information on sex? An open, systematic and relevant sex education in schools! Yes, it is time to teach our kids more than the reproductive anatomy and the menstruation cycle. Topics such as sexual attraction, safe sex, contraceptives and healthy relationships need to be addressed in a sex-positive environment. Upon hearing this, religious conservatives and groups alike will start echoing their traditional argument that sex education in schools will only encourage

(more) minors to have sex which will eventually lead to various other social issues.

As much as we want to live in a sexually-repressed fantasy world, the reality is a simple one: Malaysians including the minors are having sex before marriage with or without proper sexual knowledge. We only need to honestly ask ourselves to affirm this claim. In fact, a national survey conducted in 2000 has found that about 13% of unmarried youths in Malaysia have experienced sexual intercourse (vaginal, oral or anal). Frighteningly, 72% of them did not use any contraception during their first intercourse.

These numbers may very well be an under-reporting as sex is still a forbidden subject in the country. Therefore, it is essential to equip our younger generation with proper sexual knowledge. A good sex education will help the kids to understand their body better and avoid unnecessary fear, worry and guilt associated with their normal biological development. They will also learn to be responsible and an advocate for their own reproductive and sexual health. The kids will be equipped with the knowledge and skills to be in loving and respectful romantic relationships.

They will understand to reverence a fellow human being and that will help prevent various forms of sexual violence in the country. They will also have increased sexual confidence which will allow them to practice safer sex such as getting contraceptives and insisting partners to use contraceptives.

Importantly, good sex education can help prevent unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and other associated problems. In line

with our current science curriculum, when it comes to safe sex, the adolescents are more concerned about preventing a pregnancy than a STI.

This attitude might motivate them to focus solely on pregnancy avoidance, making them more vulnerable to various types of STI such as HIV/AIDS. Thus, giving them adequate information on STIs will help promoting sexual health and minimizing risks among our younger generation. It is also important to note that a review of sex education worldwide has found that sex education does not promote early sexual practice or increase sexual activity. In contrast, sex education has been shown to reduce the number of sexual partners and the frequency of sex.

It also fosters safe sex and responsible sexual behaviour. Thus, a good sex education will help our kids to acquire accurate sexual information and make decisions about their sexual behaviours more wisely. No matter what they choose, may it be abstinence, delay in sexual involvement or active safe sex; they will be well-equipped to be responsible and in control of their own sexuality. It might also be argued that teaching about sex should be left to parents at home and not to teachers at school.

However, the conservative parents who freak out and are in against the proposal of sex education are also least likely to talk about sex to their kids because those parents are less comfortable and/or less knowledgeable in the topic. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary to include sex education as a formal subject in both primary and secondary school curriculums in the country. Yes, we need to start in primary schools. Currently, our kids formally learn about sex for the first time when they are around 15 years old.

It might be too naive of us to think that our kids are not exposed to sexual materials and are not experimenting with their sexuality prior to the age of 15. Thus, age-appropriate sex education has to be started as early as possible. Furthermore, sex education should to be taught by sex-positive teachers, not individuals who see sex as something sinful and filthy, so that the kids will be exposed to unbiased information about human sexuality. In sum, sex education in schools is capable of creating a sexually-positive and healthy society, yet it is long overdue in Malaysia. So, why the wait?