

Typical Sexual Behavior of Young Children

Often, sexual behavior in children is very disturbing to adults. Much of this behavior is part of normal child development. Behavior, which is typical for a child's age, should be of little concern. Behavior, which is not typical, can be a warning sign of abuse.

Ages 0-4

REDIRECT (It's typical!)	MONITOR (Not as typical, Slow down)	PROTECTION (Not typical, ABUSIVE)
Comfort in being nude	Preoccupies themselves with sexual behaviors	Discloses of sexual abuse
Touches or rubs own genitals (randomly) or masturbates openly	Masturbates in preference to other activities	Compulsively masturbates which may cause self-injury, or in a persistent nature or duration
Shows genitals, is interested, and/or explores the differences between genitals	Persistently watches others in sexual activity, during toilet or bath times, or when nude	Demonstrates specific adult-like sexual touches or sexual activities, for example; imitates sexual intercourse
Shows an interest in body parts and their functions	Explicit sexual talk, art, and/or play	Persistently uses sexual themes in talk, art, and/or play
Wants to touch familiar children's' genitals during play, toilet, or bath times (out of curiosity)	Follows others into private spaces like toilets or bathrooms to look at their body or touch them	Persistently touches the genitals or private parts of others
Participates in make believe games that involve looking at and/or touching the bodies of familiar children, for example; "show me yours and I'll show you mine", playing "family", "house" and/or "doctor".	Pulls other children's pants down or skirts up against their will (displays power over the other child by force)	Forces other children to engage in sexual activity
Asks about or wants to touch the breasts, bottoms or genitals of familiar adult, for example: when in the bath	Touches the genitals/private parts of other children in preference to other activities	Sexual behavior between young children which involves penetration with objects, masturbation of others, and/or oral sex

Children's Sexual Behavior Guide for Personal Safety AGES 5-9

REDIRECT (It's typical!)	MONITOR (Not as typical, Slow down)	PROTECTION (Not typical, ABUSIVE)
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Increased sense of privacy about bodies	Masturbation in preference to other activities; in public, with others, and/or causing self-injury	Compulsive masturbation; self-injuring, self-harming, and/or to seek an audience
Body touching and holding own genitals	Explicit talk, art, and/or play of a sexual nature	Disclosure of sexual abuse
Masturbation; usually with awareness of privacy.	Persistent questions and/or comments about sexuality, despite being answered or addressed	Persistent bullying involving sexual aggression; pulling/lifting/removing other children's clothing
Curiosity about other children's genitals that involve looking at and/or touching the bodies of familiar children; "show me yours and I'll show you mine", playing 'family'	Persistent nudity and/or exposing private parts in public places	Sexual behavior with significantly younger or less developmental-abled children
Curiosity about sexuality like questions about babies, gender, relationships, sexual activity	Persistently watching or following others to look at or touch them	Accessing the rooms of sleeping children to touch or engage in sexual activity
Telling stories or asking questions, using swear words, sexual words or names for private parts	Pulling other children's pants down or skirts up against their will	Simulation of or participation in sexual activities such as; oral sex or sexual intercourse with older children or adults.
Use of mobile phones and internet in relationships with known peers	Persistently mimicking sexual-flirting behavior, too advanced for age	Presence of a sexually transmitted infection

Children's Sexual Behavior Guide for Personal Safety AGES 10-13

REDIRECT (It's typical!)	MONITOR (Not as typical, Slow down)	PROTECTION (Not typical, ABUSIVE)
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Growing need for privacy	Masturbation in preference to other activities in public	Compulsive masturbation; which may cause self-injury and/or seeking an audience
Masturbation in private	Persistent explicit talk, art, or play which is sexual or sexually intimidating	Engaging others in a process to gain sexual activity by using grooming techniques; gifts, lies, bribery, flattery, etc.
Curiosity and seeking information about sexuality	Accessing age restricted materials; movies, games, internet with sexually explicit content	Force or coercion of others into sexual activity
Use of sexual language	Persistent expression of fear of sexually transmitted infection or pregnancy	Oral sex and/or intercourse with a person of different age, developmental ability and/or peer grouping
Interest and/or participation in girlfriend or boyfriend relationships	Changes to behavior, such as older children or adult flirting behaviors, and/or seeking relationships with older children or adults in preference to peers	Presence of sexually transmitted infection or pregnancy
Hugging, kissing, and/or affectionate touching that is appropriate, with known peers	Engaging in sexual activities with an unknown peer; deep kissing, mutual masturbation, etc.	Deliberately sending and/or publishing sexual images of self or another person
Exposing themselves amongst same age peers within the context of play; for example, occasional flashing or mooning	Oral sex and/or intercourse with a known partner of similar age and developmental ability	Arranging a face to face meeting with an online acquaintance

Typical Stages of Sex Play

- 2 ½ Years:** Child shows interest in different postures of boys and girls when urinating and interest in physical differences between the sexes.
- 3 years:** Verbally expresses interests in the physical differences between the sexes and in the different postures in urinating. Girls attempt to urinate standing up.
- 4 years:** Extremely conscious of the navel. Under social stress may grasp genitals and may need to urinate. May play game of “show”. Also, verbal play about elimination. Interest in other people’s bathrooms, may demand privacy for self, but extremely interested in the bathroom activity of others.
- 5 years:** Familiar with, but not too much interested in the physical differences between the sexes. Less sex play and game of “show”. More modest and less exposing self. Less bathroom play and less interest in unfamiliar bathrooms.
- 6 years:** Marked awareness of and interest in differences between the sexes in body structure. Questioning mutual investigation by both sexes reveal practical answers to questions about sex differences. Mild sex play or exhibitionism in play or in school toilets. Games of “show”. Giggling, calling names or remarks involving words dealing with elimination functions.
- 7 years:** Less interest in sex. Some mutual exploration, experimentation, and sex play, but is less than earlier.
- 8 years:** Interest in sex rather high, though exploration and play less common than at six. Interest in peeping, dirty jokes, provocative giggling. Children whisper, write or spell “elimination” or “sex” words.
- 9 years:** May talk about sex information with friends of the same sex. Interest in details of own organs and functions; seek out picture books. Sex swearing begins.
- 10 years:** Considerable interest in dirty jokes.