

Outline of healthy sexual development of pre- to primary school children:

Stage of development	Common behaviors	Encouraging healthy development
Infancy (Ages 0-2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curiosity about their bodies that can include genitals • Touching their genitals • No inhibitions regarding nudity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach correct names for body parts such as penis and vagina • Help children begin to understand how to interact respectfully with peers of the same age
Early Childhood (Ages 2-5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Occasional stimulation of genitals (masturbation). Focus more soothing behavior rather than any sexual connotation. • Consensual and playful exploration with children of the same age including games such as dr.-dr. or house-house. • May ask questions about reproduction. • May show curiosity in regard to adult bodies. • Continued lack of inhibition regarding nudity. • May use slang terms for body parts or bodily functions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide basic simple answers to questions about body, body functions and reproduction. • Encourage basic understanding of privacy and when things are appropriate vs inappropriate. • Explain the differences between wanted and unwanted touch. • Promote choices and teach boundaries. Let children know that their bodies belong to them and that they can say no to unwanted touch.

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<p>Late Childhood (Ages 9-12)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As puberty begins an increase need for privacy and independence is often expressed • May express curiosity about adult bodies • May express curiosity about sexual intimacy and reproduction • As social norms and boundaries become clearer, stimulation of genitals (masturbation) are likely to occur in private 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide information about the physical aspects of puberty and changes in their bodies; • Educate children on the social and emotional aspects of puberty. Normalize emotions and needs they may be experiencing • Provide age-appropriate sexuality information and basic information about sexual behavior and sexually transmitted infections • Encourage critical thinking and building skills to differentiate fact from fiction in media images and representations of sexuality • Support them in understanding that they have both rights and responsibilities • Encourage healthy friendships with the op • opposite sex.

Behaviour falling within healthy sexual development has the following characteristics:

- a. Playful, curious, mutual consent with the focus on age-appropriate exploration;
- b. With a child of similar age and developmental and not with a much older or much younger child;
- c. No threats, intimidation, bribery or aggression involved;
- d. Occurs occasionally and does not interfere with other activities or developmental tasks;
- e. When boundaries are placed on the behavior or adults ask children to stop they usually do and the behavior decrease;
- f. Behavior does not cause any physical or emotional harm to self or others.

ADAPTED BY AUCAMP (2015) from:

NSVRC 2013: An Overview of healthy sexual development.

National Child Traumatic Stress Network 2009. Sexual development and behaviour in children: Information for parents and caregivers. Alaska Department of Health.

The Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologist of Canada 2012. Sexuality and childhood development.

Harborview CBT 2012. Sexual behaviour and children. When is it a problem and what to do about it.

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