

Common Sexual Behaviors

INFANCY (AGES 0-3)

- Exploring, touching and showing their own private parts
- Erections
- Trying to touch mother's or other women's breasts
- Wanting to be naked
- Attempting to see others naked
- Asking questions about their own, and others' bodies and bodily functions
- Having little sense of shame or privacy

PRESCHOOLERS (AGES 3-5)

- Exploring and touching their own private parts, in public and private
- Showing privates to others
- Trying to touch mother's or other women's breasts
- Wanting to be naked
- Attempting to see others naked
- Having little sense of shame or privacy
- Asking questions about their own, and others' bodies and bodily functions
- Curious about gender differences
- Exploring private parts with peers
- Talking about bodily functions
- Uses "dirty" words for bathroom, private body parts or sexual functions
- Mimicking dating behavior

Resources: <http://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/assets/pdfs/sexualdevelopmentandbehavior.pdf>; and Toni Cavanagh Johnson, "Understanding Children's Sexual Behaviors: What's Natural and Healthy" (2011)

KINDERGARTENERS - 4TH GRADERS (AGES 5-9)

- Attempting to see other people naked or undressing
- Purposefully touching private parts because it feels good - usually in private
- Playing games with children their own age that involve sexual behavior (such as "truth or dare", "playing family", or "boyfriend/girlfriend")
- Looking at pictures of naked or partially naked people
- Interested in animals' breeding behavior
- Telling "dirty" jokes
- Viewing/listening to sexual content in the media
- Interested in pregnancy & birth
- Wanting more privacy; reluctant to talk to adults about sexual issues

5TH - 8TH GRADERS/PRE-ADOLESCENTS (AGES 10-13)

- Hormonal changes and outside influences, such as peers, media and Internet increase sexual awareness
- Sexual attraction to/interest in peers begins
- Using sexual words and discussing sexual acts and personal values, particularly with peers
- Increased experimentation with sexual behaviors, sexual behavior games
- Kissing, hugging and 'dating'
- Interested in other people's body parts and the changes that happen in puberty
- Looking for sexual pictures
- Masturbation in private
- Wanting more privacy; reluctant to talk to adults about sexual issues



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