

Understanding Sexual Behavior

Ages 9-12

Sexual behavior in school age children tends to be more private than public. As they move into puberty, children are very interested in the changes in their body.

Developmentally Appropriate Behaviors:

Ways to Respond:

Mutual sex play with children close in age engaged in lightheartedly; for example, undressing, looking, playing "doctor"

Redirect this behavior. Read books with your child or give them access to books about sex, sexuality, and puberty

Masturbates occasionally in private

Talk with your child about keeping genitals private

An increasing awareness of privacy; for example, wanting to use the bathroom alone

Talk with your child about privacy for themselves and others

Gender roles are less defined than in adolescence

Expose your child to a wide range of cross-gender activities

Potentially Concerning Behaviors

- Putting mouth on other people's genitals. Simulating or performing adult sexual behaviors
- Excessive masturbation to the exclusion of other activities, or with objects, or in public
- Using threats, bribes, manipulation, or force to engage others in sex play
- Shows unusual fascination or obsession with genitalia

Ways to Respond:

Although you may feel shocked, panicked, or frightened, your reaction is critical to helping your child.

- Remain Calm
- Stop the behavior
- Initiate a conversation about the behavior
- Seek professional help. The following types of agencies or professionals can assist you:
 - Child Protection Agency
 - Mental Health Professional
 - Law Enforcement
 - Physician or Nurse