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:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavior</th>
<th>Ways to Respond</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mutual sex play with children close in age engaged in lightheartedly; for example, undressing, looking, playing “doctor”</td>
<td>Redirect this behavior. Read books with your child or give them access to books about sex, sexuality, and puberty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masturbates occasionally in private</td>
<td>Talk with your child about keeping genitals private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An increasing awareness of privacy; for example, wanting to use the bathroom alone</td>
<td>Talk with your child about privacy for themselves and others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender roles are less defined than in adolescence</td>
<td>Expose your child to a wide range of cross-gender activities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**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

*Special thanks to the Larimer Child Advocacy Center for providing the content for this handout.*