

8 years old

- Know more about body parts and how body works
- Interest in sex rather high but exploration and play is less than at 6 years old
- Interest in smutty jokes; giggling
- Children whisper words, e.g. 'poo' and 'wee' or 'sexy words'

9 years old

- May talk about 'sex' with friends of same sex
- Seeks out sexy pictures in books
- Sex swearing; sex poems
- Interested in own organs and function

10 years old

- More interest in smutty jokes

Puberty to adolescence

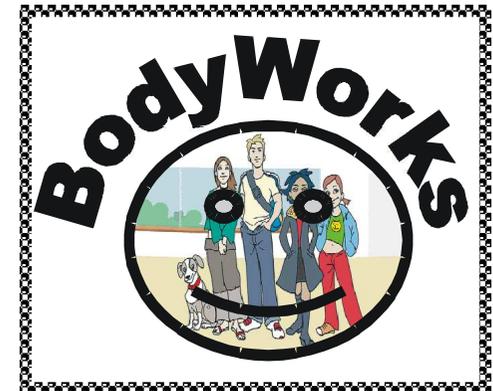
- Normal adolescent development includes a broad range of sexual desires and experiences - it can depend on the background, social factors and culture of the child as to whether this can cause future emotional problems
- This is a time of flux and experimentation
- In older times the differences between boys and girls were described more mechanically

How to set boundaries for your child

- The need to use correct words for parts of the body
- Provide very clear boundaries
- Provide positive consequences and outcomes for appropriate behaviour
- Use a structured approach to inappropriate behaviour that is constantly reinforced when inappropriate behaviour recurs
- Stop children and young people gossiping, teasing or rumour-spreading about puberty, sexual development or sexual activity
- Make sure the child or young person knows how to keep themselves safe; how to shout or call for help if they need to
- Make sure the child or young person knows who they can talk to if necessary
- Some sexualised behaviours will need help or intervention
- It can be positive to involve and inform the people and/or staff who have day-to-day involvement with the child or young person

Sexual Development of Children

A PARENT AND CARERS GUIDE



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Normal sexual development

There is a normal process by which children develop sexually and emotionally. This takes place from infancy. The main aspect of this is children's curiosity; they have a natural desire to learn about their bodies, their emotions and those of others.

Some sexual behaviour is a normal part of growing up, as part of developing social relationships. Understanding sexual behaviour as part of children growing up and dealing with inappropriate behaviour in a sensitive but firm way is a positive way to support their development.

Normal stages of child sexual development

2 months old

- Erection common in boys (from birth)

9-12 months old

- Plays with genitals and handles when clothes off
- May be beginning to masturbate or manipulate
- Wants to be changed when in wet soiled nappy
- Girls look at parent/main caregiver when urinating

1 year old

- Affectionate towards parent/main caregiver when tired, wet or troubled
- Hugs and shows affection towards dolls and teddies

2 years old

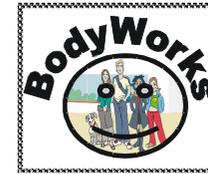
- Kisses at bedtime
- May find it hard to go to toilet in strange bathrooms
- Aware of own genitals; may handle when unclothed
- Beginnings of interest in obvious physical difference between males and females
- Shows interest in different postures for urinating and watching others in bathroom, going to the toilet or undressing

3 years old

- Talks about physical difference between males and females and different positions for urinating
- Girls may try to urinate standing up
- Interest in own genitals; showing and touching them
- Wants to look at and touch adults
- Wants to look at and touch mother's breasts

4 years old

- Extremely aware of navel
- If worried or anxious may grab genitals and may need to urinate
- May play game of 'show' by showing genitals or urinating before another child
- Interest in people's bathrooms
- Demands privacy for self but extremely interested in bathroom or toilet activities of others
- Talks openly about 'poo' (passing motions) or urinating



GROWING UP IS
AN ADVENTURE

5 years old

- Aware of genitals and boy/girl differences but lessening of interest in anatomical differences
- Masturbation or genital manipulation
- Less sex play and games of 'show'
- Lessening interest in unfamiliar bathrooms
- More modest; less exposure of self

6 years old

- Marked awareness or interest in differences between males and females in body structure; boys asking factual questions about their testicles
- Mild sex play or exhibitionism, e.g. 'doctors and nurses'
- Some children are subjected to sex play by older children; the age and power differences between the children are critical factors in defining this as normal sex play or exploration

7-8 years old

- Less interest in sex - some mutual exploration, experimentation and sex play, but less than earlier
- Know about social relations, sexual intercourse, sperm and egg, but generally not combined to make a whole picture