



# Sexual Behaviors in Children

## Guidelines for Parents

### Preschool (ages 0-5 years)



#### Common

- Questions about differences in body parts, boys and girls, hygiene and toileting, pregnancy, and birth
- Self-stimulation of genitals (masturbation)
- Showing and looking at private body parts

#### Inappropriate\*

- Sexual acts or use of sexual language
- Sexual contact with other children
- Masturbation not responsive to redirection or limits

### School-Age (6-8 years)



#### Common

- Questions and needs knowledge about menstruation, pregnancy, physical development, relationships, sexual behavior, personal values
- Experimenting with same-age and gender children, including kissing, fondling, exhibitionism, and role-playing
- Self-stimulation of genitals (masturbation) in private

#### Uncommon\*

- Discussion or knowledge of explicit sexual acts
- Adult-like sexual interactions
- Behaving sexually in public, phone or internet technology

### School-Age (9-12 years)



#### Common

- Questions and needs knowledge sexual materials, information, relationships, sexual behavior, the use of sexual words, discussion of sexual acts and personal values among peers
- Increased experimentation of sexual behaviors and romantic relationships with same-age children
- Self-stimulation of genitals (masturbation) in private

#### Uncommon\*

- Regularly occurring adult-like sexual behavior
- Behaving sexually in public places

### Adolescence (13-16 years)



#### Common

- Questions about decision-making, social relationships, and sexual customs
- Self-stimulation of genitals (masturbation) in private
- Sexual experimentation among the same age

#### Uncommon\*

- Sexual interest in much younger children
- Aggression in touching others' genitals
- Adult participation of explicit sexual acts

#### References:

- Kellogg ND. Sexual behaviors in children: evaluation and management. *Am Fam Physician*. 2010;82(10):1233-1238
- American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), Child Welfare Information Gateway, and StopItNow.org

For more information, including puberty and reproduction, visit [www.procarseatsafety.com/childsexualbehaviors.html](http://www.procarseatsafety.com/childsexualbehaviors.html)

**\*Questions talk with your pediatrician or call 1-888-773-8368**



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