

Normal Sexual Development by Age

0-2 Years	Learn about love and trust through caregivers	Learn and explore their bodies through the sense of touch, including their genitals	Have no inhibitions about nudity	Begin to learn distinction between male/female and learn expected behaviors	May have spontaneous reactions that appear sexual but are not (i.e. erection or lubrication)	Develop a sense of trust
2-5 Years	Develop language to describe genitalia	Should clearly know the differences between males and females	May know basics of human reproduction	May show curiosity about adult genitalia	May play house or doctor or engage in consensual genital exploration with same aged peers	May self-stimulate/self-touch often
5-8 Years	May have basic understanding and curiosity of puberty and human reproduction	Understand physical, behavioral, and emotional distinctions between males and females	Will begin to become modest about nudity	May understand difference in sexual orientation	May self-stimulate/self-touch or engage in consensual genital exploration with same age peers	Begin to have more stable friendships with peers of the same sex and start to feel peer pressure
8-10 Years	Bodies may start changing, puberty may begin	Most know about sexual intercourse	May start asking questions about sex and sexuality and be looking for more accurate information	May discuss sex information with friends	May start to be embarrassed, uncomfortable or private with their bodies	May be more curious about developed male and female bodies
10-13 Years	Puberty will continue and children may have growing curiosity about sexuality	Erections and masturbation occur in private	Most children understand prenatal growth	May have a growing need for privacy	Hugging, kissing and touching with known same-aged peers	May start comparing themselves to others and wonder if they are normal
13-17 Years	May start accessing information about sexuality	Viewing materials for sexual arousal (i.e. music videos, magazines, movies)	May have an interest in dating or start to fantasize about romantic or sexual situations	Use of mobile phones and internet in relationships with same-aged peers	May start to feel pressure to engage in sexual activities	May start to engage in kissing, touching, oral sex and intercourse.

(Adapted from Georgia Center for Child Advocacy, Purdue University and Education.com)

How to Encourage Healthy Sexual Development

0-2 Years	Teach the correct names of the body such as penis and vagina	Explain basic information about the differences between male and female anatomy	Help children begin to understand how to interact respectfully with peers of the same age	Provide very simple answers to questions about the body and bodily functions	Use opportunities such as baths or diaper changes to talk about boundaries and genitals being private
2-5 Years	Provide basic information about reproduction (i.e., babies grow in the uterus of a woman)	Encourage a basic understanding of privacy and when things are appropriate/comfortable and inappropriate/uncomfortable. Explain that if a grown up or child touches the child in an inappropriate way the child must tell an adult	Explain the difference between wanted and unwanted touch. For example, a hug that is welcome and positive versus one that is unwelcome and uncomfortable	Teach children about boundaries and tell them that their bodies belong to them and they can say no to unwanted touch. Model this by not forcing children to hug or kiss someone that they do not want to	Model privacy by going to the bathroom and showering in private
5-8 Years	Encourage understanding of genders. Children who identify as transgender might experience confusion and will need more support from adults	Explain the basics of human reproduction, including the role of vaginal sex.	Talk about physical changes that will occur during puberty	Explain that there are different sexual orientations such as heterosexual, homosexual and bisexual	Respect children's need for privacy and respect their choices for unwanted touches. Model this by not forcing children to hug or kiss someone that they do not want to
8-10 Years	Continue to provide information about the physical changes during puberty and changes to their bodies	Talk about the social and emotional aspects of puberty (i.e. mood swings and comparing bodies with other peers). Help children know that these new emotions and needs are normal	Help children understand the difference between sexuality and body image in real life vs. what is shown on T.V., magazines, etc.	Support their understanding their rights and responsibilities in friendships and relationships. Talk about and model healthy relationships	Identify appropriate adults and ways to get information about sex and sexuality
10-13 Years	Provide accurate information about sex and sexuality	Talk about how children can find information/resources on sex, sexuality and sexual health	Be clear about your family's values and how other families have different values about sex and sexuality	Continue to talk to children about body boundaries and unwanted touches through teenage years	Talk to your children about healthy relationships including peer pressure's effects on relationships
13-17 Years	Continue open communication about sex and sexuality	Provide information on sexual health.	Offer yourself as a resource if they have questions or concerns about sex or sexuality	Identify appropriate adults and ways to get information about sex, sexuality and sexual health	Continue to talk to your children about healthy relationships including consensual sex

(Adapted from National Sexual Violence Resource Center)