

## Typical Sexual Development

Age	Sexual Development	Child Should Know*
<b>Birth – 2 ½</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Learn to see the world as scary or friendly.</li> <li>▪ Starts to learn how people relate to one another.</li> <li>▪ Caring touch is important in the building trust.</li> <li>▪ Learn whether they are boys or girls by age 2; begin to understand part of what that means.</li> </ul>	<p>The way we care for children moment to moment and day to day from birth through the first years answers these important questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Am I worthy of attention?</li> <li>▪ Can I count on someone to respond to my needs?</li> <li>▪ Are people trustworthy?</li> <li>▪ Am I safe enough here that I can explore and learn?</li> <li>▪ Do I have power to affect my environment?</li> </ul> <p>Through their responses to children’s cues, parents should say YES! If they do, their children are likely to do better in school, in choosing friends and in creating relationships as adults.</p>
<b>3-7</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ More interest in bodies is normal. Often ask where babies come from and have an interest in the bathroom activities of others.</li> <li>▪ Bigger differences appear between boys’ and girls’ play activities and friends.</li> <li>▪ Masturbation is common and normal, but not all children do. Pleasurable feelings are often associated with security and comfort.</li> <li>▪ Six year olds often “play doctor;” giggling and name-calling associated with going to the bathroom (“poop-head!”)</li> <li>▪ Later in this phase, children often show more modesty and become more self-conscious.</li> <li>▪ Interest in nude pictures, curiosity about bodies is common.</li> <li>▪ Clearer association between pregnancy and babies.</li> </ul>	<p>By age 5, children should know:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Correct names for sexual body parts.</li> <li>▪ That their bodies are their own and they can say NO to unwanted touch.</li> <li>▪ Where babies come from; that some people have children and some do not.</li> <li>▪ They can ask trusted adults questions about sexuality.</li> <li>▪ That sexuality is private.</li> </ul>
<b>8-12</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Transition to puberty with physical changes beginning. Periods begin for girls and ejaculation for boys begin between ages 8 and 15.</li> <li>▪ Interest in sex is high.</li> <li>▪ Body self-consciousness increases.</li> <li>▪ Crushes and hero-worship are common.</li> </ul>	<p>By ages 6-9, children should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Know that all living things reproduce themselves, live and die.</li> <li>▪ Know that living things need care.</li> <li>▪ Have and use appropriate words for body parts.</li> <li>▪ Know that there are many ways to form families.</li> <li>▪ Know the responsibilities of the members of the family, including their own duties.</li> <li>▪ View their health care provider as a supportive part of their lives and health.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Sex jokes, writing sex words, and provocative giggling are typical. Secret clubs, cliques begin.</li> <li>▪ First steps toward sexual involvement can begin, often consisting of walking home from school together, sitting together at events, phone calls, etc.</li> <li>▪ Around age 9, most children are closing the bathroom door for privacy.</li> <li>▪ Beginning of move away from parents and toward peers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Take an active part in managing their body's health and safety.</li> <li>▪ Develop and maintain friendships.</li> <li>▪ Understand reproduction basics including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sexuality is a part of life.</li> <li>Sexual feelings are normal.</li> <li>Sex can produce babies, and there are other reasons for sex, too.</li> <li>Having children is a big responsibility.</li> <li>People can choose when and whether to have children.</li> <li>Differences between male and female bodies.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><i>Before puberty, they should know about the changes that are coming, including wet dreams, menstruation, other physical changes, emotional changes, and the possibility of pregnancy.</i></p>
<p><b>13-19</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Physical changes rapidly escalate. Confusion is common and understandable in this age group, especially in light of varying rates of change for individuals.</li> <li>▪ Erections in boys are frequent and quick, often for non-sexual reasons. Masturbation and sexual fantasy are common and normal.</li> <li>▪ It's normal to be self-centered.</li> <li>▪ Learning to handle romantic/sexual relationships is part of the work of this age.</li> <li>▪ Like other teens, young people who are gay, lesbian, or bisexual become more aware of their sexuality and what it means for them.</li> <li>▪ Kids try out lots of things (ideas, hobbies, people, jobs...) to see if they fit, as they sort out who they are and what they believe.</li> <li>▪ Nationally, more than half of teens have not had sex by age 17.</li> <li>▪ Average age of first intercourse for boys: 16</li> <li>▪ Average age of first intercourse for girls: 17</li> </ul> <p><i>These ages are only 1 year younger than the 1970 averages.</i></p>	<p>By this stage (or before it), young people should know about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ways that behavior can be interpreted as sexual, and how to deal with that.</li> <li>▪ Recognizing and protecting against potential sexual abuse and how to react to such dangers.</li> <li>▪ Birth control.</li> <li>▪ Awareness of the differences between biological sex and socially assigned gender roles.</li> <li>▪ Sexually transmitted diseases.</li> <li>▪ How the media portrays sexual involvement.</li> <li>▪ Individual differences about sexuality, including sexual orientation.</li> <li>▪ Community resources.</li> <li>▪ Potential dangers of casual sex.</li> <li>▪ Their rights as sexual human beings.</li> <li>▪ Decision-making and problem-solving skills.</li> <li>▪ Communication skills.</li> <li>▪ Personal responsibility.</li> </ul>

\* Adapted from Human Sexuality: What Children Should Know and When They Should Know It, Planned Parenthood.