

## AGE APPROPRIATE SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR IN CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

### Classify the behaviour

### 0-4 years: infant, toddler, pre-school

### 5-9 years: early school years

### 9-12 years: pre-adolescent

### 13-18 years: Adolescent

#### Age appropriate sexual behaviours

Normal sexual behaviours are described in the boxes to the right, shaded in green.

These behaviours may be accompanied by laughter, spontaneity, curiosity and experimentation. Children are easily diverted from these behaviours

Age appropriate use of technology has little or low risk for sexually abusive behaviours. This use is described here to give a context for higher risk users described below.

- Touching or rubbing genitals and showing others genitals
- Touching or looking at private parts of other children or familiar adults e.g. when in the bath
- Being rude and playing doctors and nurses or mummies and daddies
- Using slang words/dirty language for bathroom and sexual functions e.g. "shit" or talking about "sexing"
- Playing age appropriate games or videos on electronic devices, under supervision (low risk for sexually abusive behaviours)

- Awareness of privacy about bodies
- Self-touching and masturbation
- With peers:
  - "Show me yours/I'll show you mine"
  - Stories/questions/names/swearing re private parts/body functions
  - kissing/holding hands; observed behaviour e.g. pinching a bottom
  - Online social contact: skill based or dress up games
- Using photos, videos to record their life
- Accidental access to pornography (risk for sexually abusive behaviours)

- Growing need for privacy
- Masturbating in private
- With peers:
  - "Show me yours/I'll show you mine"
  - Kissing and flirting
  - Talking about genitals and reproduction
  - Using dirty words or telling dirty jokes
  - Exhibitionism e.g. occasional flashing or mooning
- Having own social media accounts that are monitored by parents/carers
- Using photos, videos to record their life (low risk)
- Playing age appropriate games online (low risk)
- Access to pornography (low risk)

- Need for privacy
- Masturbating in private
- With peers:
  - Sexually explicit conversations, obscenities or jokes relevant to own culture
  - Sexually teasing and flirting
  - Kissing, hugging, holding hands
  - Foreplay with mutual consent
  - Sexual intercourse plus full range of sexual activity with similar age partner
- Viewing sexual content for arousal (low risk)
- Sending/receiving sexual images of others with consent (low risk)

#### Concerning sexual behaviours

Concerning sexual behaviours are described in the boxes to the right, shaded in orange.

The frequency and persistence of these behaviours should be monitored.

Seek professional advice if a child or young person exhibits several of these behaviours and/or the behaviours continue despite clear requests to stop.

Risks with technology use include less time with peers, grooming, viewing inappropriate content.

- Keeps masturbating after being told to stop
- Forcing another child to engage in sexual play
- Sexualised play with dolls, e.g. "humping" a teddy bear
- Touching the private parts of an animal or unfamiliar adult
- Following other children into a toilet or bathroom to look at or touch their private parts
- Spending a lot of time using technology and being upset when devices are removed (risk of inappropriate content and contacts)

- Continually rubbing/touching own genitals in public
- Persistent nudity and/or exposing private parts in public
- Continually wanting to touch other children's private parts
- Persistently using dirty words
- Wanting to play sex games with much older or younger children
- Sending/receiving "dick" pics (exploitation risk)
- Accessing pornography and playing violent or sexual video games (risks: grooming, lowers inhibitions)
- Having own social media accounts and spending a lot of time online (risks: grooming, less time with peers, inappropriate posts)

- Attempting to expose other people's genitals
- Preoccupation with masturbation
- Mutual masturbation with a peer or group
- Simulating foreplay or intercourse with peers, with clothes on
- Sexual knowledge too great for their age, when the context is considered
- Talking about fear of pregnancy or sexually transmitted infection
- Peeping, exposing\*, using obscenities
- Seeking out pornography
- Taking nude, sexual images of themselves
- Secretive about using the internet/social media (risk of being groomed or exploited)

- Being preoccupied with anxious about sex
- Being promiscuous
- Being interested in or using themes or obscenities involving sexual aggression
- Spying on others who are nude or engaged in sexual activity
- Engaging in unsafe sexual behaviour
- Seeking out pornography
- Having oral sex or intercourse with someone more than 2 years older/younger\*
- Sending/receiving sexual images of multiple people without their consent\*

#### Very concerning sexual behaviours

Very concerning behaviours are described in the boxes to the right shaded in red.

Seek professional advice, especially if a child or young person is secretive, anxious or tense - or if coercion, compulsion or threats are involved.

Some of these behaviours become criminal offences when a young person reaches the age of criminal responsibility. Report criminal offences to the police immediately.

Technology use risks include: grooming, sexual assault, pornography, exploitation and prostitution.

- Persistently touching or rubbing self to the exclusion of normal childhood activities; hurting own genitals by rubbing or touching
- Simulating sex with other children with or without clothes on
- Oral sex
- Sexual play involving forceful anal or vaginal penetration with objects
- Accessing sexual material online

- Touching or rubbing self persistently in private or public, to the exclusion of normal childhood activities
- Rubbing their genitals on other people
- Forcing other children to play sexual games
- Sexual knowledge too great for age
- Talking about sex and sexual acts habitually
- Posting sexual images or videos online
- Accessing/showing pornography to others
- Cyber bullying others using intimate images to extort other children
- Grooming other children
- Meeting online "friends" face to face (risk of sexual assault)

- Compulsive masturbation including interrupting tasks to masturbate
- Repeated/chronic peeping\*, exposing using obscenities
- Chronic interest in adult/child pornography\*
- Making others watch pornography
- Degrading/humiliating self or others using sexual themes
- Touching other children's genitals without permission\*
- Forcing others to expose their genitals
- Making written or verbal sexually explicit threats\*
- Simulating intercourse with peers, unclothed
- Penetration of dolls, other children or animals\*
- Taking nude sexual images of others
- Sharing nude sexual images of themselves
- Having suggestive avatars (online characters) or usernames (risk of grooming)
- Meeting online "friends" face to face

- Compulsive masturbation
- Masturbation in public\*
- Degrading/humiliating self or others using sexual themes
- Chronic preoccupation with sexually aggressive pornography/child pornography\*
- Attempting to expose other people's genitals
- Touching others genitals without permission\*
- Making written/verbal sexually explicit threats\*
- Making obscene phone calls, exhibitionism, voyeurism or sexually harassing others\*
- Sexual contact with much younger people\*
- Sexual contact with animals\*
- Penetrating another person forcefully\*
- Taking sexual images of others to exploit them\* (child pornography, exploitation risk)
- Having multiple nude images of others (risks as above plus exploitation)

\* For children and young people aged 10-18 these behaviours may be criminal offences