

Age Appropriate Sexual Behavior in Children and Young People (adapted from South Eastern Centre Against Sexual Assault and Family Violence)

Classification of the Behavior	0-4 years: infant, toddler, pre-school	5-9 years: early school years There may be some crossover on age/stages	9-12 years: pre-adolescent There may be some crossover on ages/stages	13-18 years: Adolescent
<p>Age Appropriate Sexual Behavior Normal sexual behaviors are described in the green boxes to the right, shaded in green.</p> <p>These Behaviors may be accompanied by laughter, spontaneity, curiosity, and experimentation. Children are easily diverted from these behaviors.</p> <p>Age appropriate use of technology has little or low risk for sexually abusive behaviors. This use is described here to give a context for higher risk uses described below.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Touching or rubbing own genitals and showing others own genitals • Touching or looking at the private parts of other children or familiar adults, e.g. when in the bath • Being nude, and playing doctors, nurses or mommies 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 behaviors) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of privacy about bodies • Self-touching and masturbation • With-peers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ "Show me yours/I'll show you mine" ◦ Stories/questions/names/ swearing re private parts/body functions ◦ Kissing holding hands; observed behavior 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 behaviors) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growing need for privacy • Masturbating in private • With peers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ "Show me yours/I'll show you mine" ◦ Kissing and flirting ◦ Talking about genitals or 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/caregivers • Using photos, videos to record their life (low risk) • Playing age appropriate games online (low risk) • Access to pornography (low risk) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for privacy • Masturbating in private • With peers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Sexually explicit conversations, obscenities, or jokes relevant to own culture ◦ Sexual teasing or flirting ◦ Kissing, hugging, holding hands ◦ Foreplay with mutual consent ◦ Sexual intercourse plus full range of sexual activity with similar age partner (within 3 years) • Viewing sexual content for arousal (low risk) • Sending/receiving sexual images of others with consent (low risk)
<p>Concerning Sexual Behaviors Concerning sexual behaviors are described in the boxes to the right, shaded in yellow.</p> <p>The frequency and persistence of these behaviors should be monitored.</p> <p>Seek professional advice if a child or young person exhibits several of these behaviors. and/or the behaviors continue despite clear requests to stop.</p> <p>Risks with technology use include less time with peers, grooming, viewing inappropriate content.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 an 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) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 gamers (risks:grooming, lowers inhibitions) • Having own social media accounts and spending a lot of time online (risks: grooming, less time with peers, inappropriate posts) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 infections • Seeking out pornography • Taking nude, sexual images of themselves • Secretive about using the internet/social media (risk of being groomed or exploited) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 engaging in sexual activity • Engaging in unsafe sexual behavior • Seeking out pornography • Having oral sex or intercourse with someone more than 3 years older/younger* • Sending/receiving sexual images of people without their consent*
<p>Very Concerning Sexual Behaviors Very concerning behaviors are described in the boxes to the right, shaded in red.</p> <p>Seek professional advice, especially if a child or young person is also secretive, anxious or tense- or if coercion, compulsion or threats are involved.</p> <p>Some of these behaviors become criminal offenses when a young person reaches the age of responsibility (12 years of age in Oregon).</p> <p>Technology use risks include: grooming, sexual assault, pornography, exploitation and prostitution.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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/young people 12-18 these behaviors may be criminal offenses.