

When Children's Sexual Behaviours Raise Concern

-Signals for Parents and Counsellors-

1. The child focuses on sexuality to a greater extent than on other aspects of his or her environment, and/or has more sexual knowledge than similar-aged children with similar background who live in the same area. A child's sexual interests should be in balance with his or her curiosity about, and exploration of, other aspects of his or her life.
2. The child has an ongoing compulsive interest in sexual, or sexually-related activities, and/or is more interested in engaging in sexual behaviours than in playing with friends, going to school, and doing other developmentally-appropriate activities.
3. The child engages in sexual behaviours with those who are much older or younger. Most school-aged children engage in sexual behaviours with children within a year or so of their age. In general, the wider the age range between children engaging in sexual behaviours, the greater the concern.
4. The child continues to ask unfamiliar children, or children who are uninterested, to engage in sexual activities. Healthy and natural sexual play usually occurs between friends and playmates.
5. The child, or a group of children, bribes or emotionally and/or physically forces another child/children of any age into sexual behaviours.
6. The child exhibits confusion or distorted ideas about the rights of others in regard to sexual behaviour. The child may contend: "She wanted it" or "I can touch him if I want to".
7. The child tries to manipulate children or adults into touching his or her genitals or causes physical harm to his or her own or other's genitals.
8. Other children repeatedly complain about the child's sexual behaviours, especially when an adult has spoken to the child.

9. The child continues to behave in sexual ways in front of adults who say "no", or the child does not seem to comprehend admonitions to curtail overt sexual behaviours in public places.
10. The child appears anxious, tense, angry, or fearful when sexual topics arise in his or her everyday life.
11. The child manifests a number of disturbing toileting behaviours: s/he plays with or smears feces, urinates outside of the bathroom, uses excessive amount of toilet paper, stuffs toilet bowls to overflow, sniffs or steals underwear.
12. The child's drawings depict genitals as the predominant feature.
13. The child manually stimulates or has oral or genital contact with animals.
14. The child has painful and/or continuous erections or vaginal discharge.

SIECUS Report, August/September 1991

For more information please call:
AIDS –Sexual Health InfoLine 1-800-668-2437 or (416) 392-2437

PH9902-0007