

Sexual Development of Young Children

Birth to Age Two

- boys have erections while still in their mother's uterus and shortly after birth
- girls produce vaginal lubrication and clitoral erections shortly after birth
- explore body parts, including the genitals
- experience pleasure from touch to all parts of the body including the genitals
- may experience an orgasmic response to rubbing of the genitals, perhaps against a toy or blanket
- begin to develop a positive or negative attitude towards own body
- start to learn expected behaviours for boys and girls

Ages Three and Four

- enjoy examining genitals and self-pleasuring (masturbation); may touch sex parts when in public places
- curious about gender and body differences; try to look at people when they are nude or undressing
- touch or try to touch their mother's or other women's breasts
- common to engage in sex play with friends and siblings
- learn sex words including bathroom and swear terms
- establish a clear belief about being either male or female
- curious about how babies are made and born
- develop own ideas about where babies come from regardless of what they are told

Ages Five to Eight

- learn what is acceptable/unacceptable to adults and which adults are comfortable with the subject
- uses sexual language to tease, shock, joke, impress friends
- may continue sex play with children of the same and/or opposite sex
- may continue self-pleasuring
- try to look at people when they are nude or undressing
- may become modest
- show strong interest in male/female roles that are often stereotypes
- affected by external influences

Ages Nine to Ten

- continue sex play and self-pleasuring; aware of erotic element of activities
- seek out same-sex peer groups; often tease and chase the opposite sex
- show signs of puberty
- tune in to external influences; may have fantasies and crushes

For more information please call:

AIDS –Sexual Health InfoLine 1-800-668-2437 or (416) 392-2437

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