

Normal Sexual Development in Children and Youth

Preschool	Latency (age 5-10)	Pre-adolescence & Adolescence
Limited peer contact	Increased peer contact	Increased peer contact
Discovers genitals; pleasure in random self-exploration	Experimentation and self-discovery evolves into masturbation	Puberty and rapid physical changes; increased sexual intensity
Interest in difference between boys and girls	Attracted to and also repulsed by opposite sex	Same-sex and opposite sex attraction
Uninhibited, interest in showing off their own body	Need for privacy; Modest in bathing/dressing; Secrecy with self-touching	Playful "exhibitionism" such as "mooning" or "streaking"
Interested in bathroom activities; verbal play around elimination	Interest in sex words and dirty jokes; looks at nude pictures	Looking at sexual photographs and "soft porn"
Curious to see and touch genitals of others	Sexual game-playing; "you show me and I'll show you"	Sexual touching and experimenting with others
Play house/doctor	Kissing/holding hands with same and opposite sex; may mimic or practice "adult kissing"	Petting; deep-kissing, fondling, rubbing, humping or penetration
Short attention span easily re-directed	Intermittent interest in sexual activity and other play	Increased focus on sexuality