

## Sexuality in Infancy and Childhood

### Masturbation

It's natural, harmless and extremely common. NOT a sign of sexual abuse. Whether you think it's moral, acceptable or appropriate is a different story.

Male and female infants are capable of sexual arousal upon birth and possibly even before.

Kids begin touching themselves as soon as motor skills permit.

Concerted masturbation begins around 2-3 and by ages 3-5, children can masturbate to orgasm.

Children who are punished and made to feel guilty are more likely to grow up and feel guilty about sexual pleasure.

### Childhood Sex Play

Beginning at about age 3, children become very interested in the differences between boys and girls. This is part of the process of acquiring gender identity. They realize that the biggest difference between the two is in the genitals. Therefore they want to see genitals. They need to confirm that all girls do indeed have a vagina and that all boys have a penis. Stripping naked and playing regular games is just as normal as stripping naked and playing doctor. It's not sexual.

### When Is Childhood Sex Play/Masturbation NOT Normal?

It can be a sign of problems if you observe the following:

- Excessive rubbing may be related to an infection (vaginal, urethral, pinworms)
- Simulating intercourse (too much sexual knowledge could indicate abuse)
- Simulating oral genital contact (too much sexual knowledge)
- Attempts to insert anything/simulating penetration (too much sexual knowledge)
- Excessive preoccupation with self-stimulation or sex play with other children to the point of not being able to re-direct them
- Refusing to stop when asked/told
- Sex play in public
- If the behavior is accompanied by other problematic behavior

Here are 10 simple tips from the experts to help you have ongoing discussions with your children.

- 1 Seek "teachable moments" to share your values.
- 2 Remind yourself that it is okay to feel uncomfortable.
- 3 Do not wait until your children ask questions.
- 4 Be "ask-able."
- 5 Consider the "question behind the question."
- 6 Listen.
- 7 Remember that facts are not enough.
- 8 Talk about the joys of sexuality.
- 9 Keep in mind that you are talking to your children because you care about their happiness and well-being.
- 10 Know what is taught about sexuality in your schools, faith communities, and youth groups.

The Sex Information and Education Council of the United States: [www.siecus.org](http://www.siecus.org)

Here you will find many resources, including their 112-page Guidelines for school-based Comprehensive Sexuality Education that you can tailor to your own needs. To find the Guidelines at the SIECUS homepage do the following:

1. Under the Information and Education pull down menu, select Comprehensive Sexuality Education
2. In the box to the left select Educator Resources
3. Select Guidelines for Comprehensive Sexuality Education: Kindergarten-12<sup>th</sup> Grade

Guidelines cover 6 Key Concepts with 6-7 topics under each Key Concept at the following 4 developmental Levels:

**Level 1** - middle childhood, ages 5 through 8; early elementary school

**Level 2** - preadolescence, ages 9 through 12; upper elementary school

**Level 3** - early adolescence, ages 12 through 15; middle school/junior high school

**Level 4** - adolescence, ages 15 through 18; high school

Also at the homepage, there is a Quick Links "Tell Us Who You Are" pull-down menu to the left. Select "A Parent" and you will find many other resources.

## Guidelines for Comprehensive Sexuality Education: Key Concepts and Topics

<p><b>Key Concept 1: Human Development</b></p> <p>Topic 1: Reproductive and Sexual Anatomy and Physiology            Topic 2: Puberty            Topic 3: Reproduction            Topic 4: Body Image            Topic 5: Sexual Orientation            Topic 6: Gender Identity</p>	<p><b>Key Concept 4: Sexual Behavior</b></p> <p>Topic 1: Sexuality Throughout Life            Topic 2: Masturbation            Topic 3: Shared Sexual Behavior            Topic 4: Sexual Abstinence            Topic 5: Human Sexual Response            Topic 6: Sexual Fantasy            Topic 7: Sexual Dysfunction</p>
<p><b>Key Concept 2: Relationships</b></p> <p>Topic 1: Families            Topic 2: Friendship            Topic 3: Love            Topic 4: Romantic Relationships and Dating            Topic 5: Marriage and Lifetime Commitments            Topic 6: Raising Children</p>	<p><b>Key Concept 5: Sexual Health</b></p> <p>Topic 1: Reproductive Health            Topic 2: Contraception            Topic 3: Pregnancy and Prenatal Care            Topic 4: Abortion            Topic 5: Sexually Transmitted Diseases            Topic 6: HIV and AIDS            Topic 7: Sexual Abuse, Assault, Violence, and Harassment</p>
<p><b>Key Concept 3: Personal Skills</b></p> <p>Topic 1: Values            Topic 2: Decision-making            Topic 3: Communication            Topic 4: Assertiveness            Topic 5: Negotiation            Topic 6: Looking for Help</p>	<p><b>Key Concept 6: Society and Culture</b></p> <p>Topic 1: Sexuality and Society            Topic 2: Gender Roles            Topic 3: Sexuality and the Law            Topic 4: Sexuality and Religion            Topic 5: Diversity            Topic 6: Sexuality and the Media            Topic 7: Sexuality and the Arts</p>

## **Key Concept 1: Human Development**

*Human development is characterized by the interrelationship between physical, emotional, social, and intellectual growth.*

### **Human Development Life Behaviors:**

*Having applied the human development subconcepts at the appropriate age, the learner will be able to:*

- Appreciate one's own body.
- Seek further information about reproduction as needed.
- Affirm that human development includes sexual development, which may or may not include reproduction or sexual experience.
- Interact with all genders in respectful and appropriate ways.
- Affirm one's own sexual orientation and respect the sexual orientations of others.
- Affirm one's own gender identities and respect the gender identities of others.

### **Topic 1: Reproductive and Sexual Anatomy and Physiology**

*Subconcept: The human body has the capability to reproduce as well as to give and receive sexual pleasure.*

#### **Developmental Messages:**

**Level 1** - middle childhood, ages 5 through 8; early elementary school

- Each body part has a correct name and a specific function.
- A person's genitals, reproductive organs, and genes determine whether the person is male or female.
- A boy/man has nipples, a penis, a scrotum, and testicles.
- A girl/woman has breasts, nipples, a vulva, a clitoris, a vagina, a uterus, and ovaries.
- Some sexual or reproductive organs, such as penises and vulvas, are external or on the outside of the body while others, such as ovaries and testicles, are internal or inside the body.
- Both boys and girls have body parts that feel good when touched.

**Level 2** - preadolescence, ages 9 through 12; upper elementary school

- During puberty, internal and external sexual and reproductive organs mature in preparation for adulthood.
- A young man's ability to reproduce starts when he begins to produce sperm.
- A young woman's ability to reproduce starts when she begins to menstruate.

**Level 3** - early adolescence, ages 12 through 15; middle school/junior high school

- The sexual response system differs from the reproductive system.
- Some sexual and reproductive organs provide pleasure.

**Level 4** - adolescence, ages 15 through 18; high school

- Sexual differentiation, whether a fetus will be male or female, is determined largely by chromosomes and occurs early in prenatal development.
- Some babies are born intersexed which means that they may have ambiguous genitals that are not clearly male or female and/or that their chromosomes do not match their genitals.
- Hormones influence growth and development as well as sexual and reproductive functions.
- A woman's ability to reproduce ceases after menopause; after puberty, a man can usually reproduce for the rest of his life.
- Individuals may want to use a mirror to look closely at their external organs so they can note any changes that may indicate health problems.