

NATURAL DEVELOPMENT AND REDFLAGS IN SEXUAL BEHAVIOR OF CHILDREN

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Ensuring the safety and well-being of children is a shared responsibility for parents, caregivers, and professionals alike. This paper provides a comprehensive overview of common sexual behaviors in children, as well as red flags that may indicate concerns during sexual development. By fostering open communication and creating a supportive environment, we can empower children to understand healthy boundaries while safeguarding them from harm. The following sections will cover typical developmental milestones, and signs of concerning behaviors. Prioritizing safety is about more than prevention—it's about creating a secure, nurturing environment where children can grow, learn, and thrive.

Salam,

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Asma

Ages 0-5

	Natural	Seek professional help/ intervention
Touching/ Sexual acts	Touches or rubs their own genitals during diaper changes, while falling asleep, when feeling tense, excited, or scared, or simply because it feels pleasurable.	Touches/rubs self to the exclusion of normal childhood activities. Hurts own genitals by touching/rubbing. Uses foreign object to touch/rub.
	Touches the “private parts” of familiar adults and children with hand or body.	Touches the “private parts” of adults or children and, if questioned, deny it. Continues behavior even after being told no repeatedly
	Puts something in own genitals or rectum one time for curiosity.	Any coercion, force, pain in putting/trying to put something genitals or rectum of self or other person.
	Explores differences between males’ and females’ bodies	Asks people to take off their clothes. Tries to forcibly undress people or take photos of others.
	Interested in watching people do bathroom functions.	Refuses to leave people alone in bathroom. Forces/sneaks way into

Exploration		bathroom after being repeatedly told no.
	Interested in own faeces.	Repeatedly plays or smears faeces after scolding. Angry when doing it.
Social /curiosity	Asks about the genitals, breasts, intercourse, babies.	Asks unfamiliar people after parent has answered all questions. Sexual knowledge too great for age.
	Interested in having/birthing a baby- both boys and girls.	Displays fear or anger about babies, birthing or intercourse.
	Plays “doctor” inspecting others’ bodies, including “private parts”.	Forces child to take off clothes and play “doctor.” Repeatedly plays this even after intervention.
	Plays house, acts out roles of mommy and daddy.	Simulated or real intercourse without clothes; oral genital contact.
	Erections.	Very frequent. Fearful of erections.

Body /self- development

Likes to be nude. May show others his/her genitals.

Refuses to put on clothes. Secretly shows “private parts” in public after many scoldings.

Child stands/sits too close to familiar adults and children.

After consistent reminders by the adults, the child stands/ sits with his/her body touching familiar/unfamiliar adults, which makes the adults uncomfortable.

Ages 5-10

	Natural	Seek professional help/ intervention
Touching / sexual acts	Puts something in own genitals/rectum for the physical sensation, curiosity or exploration.	Any coercion or force in putting/trying to put something in genitals/rectum of other child. Causes harm to own/others genitals/rectum.
	Interest in touching genitals, breast, or buttocks of another same-age child or have child touch his/hers.	Coerces or tries to coerce unwilling child to touch his or her genitals, breasts, or buttocks or allow touching of theirs. Forced or mutual oral, anal, or vaginal sex.
	Kisses/hugs familiar adults and children. Allows kisses/hugs by familiar adults and children.	Talks/acts in a highly sexualized manner with known or unknown adults/children, which makes them feel uncomfortable. Physical contact with any adult causes agitation, anger, fear or anxiety to the child or adult
	Touches/rubs own genitals when going to sleep, when tense, excited, afraid or because it feels good.	Show genitals at school and/or other places to express anger or disdain for authority.

Exploration

		Behaviors persists even after being redirected and corrected.
	Explores differences between adult males' and females' bodies	Plays male or female roles in a sad, angry or aggressive manner exclusively.
	Takes advantage of opportunity to look at nude people.	Asks others to take off their clothes. Tries to forcible undress children or adults. Tries to photograph others without their knowledge or consent.
	Wants to compare genitals with peer-aged friends.	Demands to see the genitals, breasts, or buttocks of others.
	Looks at nude pictures on the Internet, videos, magazines, etc.	Wants to masturbate to nude pictures or display them
	Interest in breeding behaviour of animals.	Sexual behaviours with animals.
	Asks about genitals, breast, intercourse, babies	Asks endless questions about sex after curiosity satisfied. Sexual knowledge/vocabulary/

Social /Curiosity

		thoughts too advanced for age
	Boys and girls are interested in having/birthing a baby.	Child displays fear or anger about babies or intercourse.
	Plays house, may simulate all roles of mommy and daddy.	Humping others while naked. Intercourse with another child. Forcing sexual contact on a child or adult.
	Thinks other gender children are “gross” or have “cooties”. Chases them.	Uses bad language against other child’s family. Makes sexual threats.
	Talks about sex with friends. Talks about having a girl/boyfriend. Likes to hear and tell “dirty” jokes, makes a few sexual sounds.	Talks about sex and sexual acts habitually. Repeatedly in trouble with regard to sexual talk.
	Plays games with same-aged children related to sex and sexuality.	Child/Children force others to play sexual games that make them uncomfortable.
	Pretends to be opposite gender.	Hates/fears being own gender. Hates own genitals.

Body/Self-development

Wants privacy when in bathroom or changing clothes.

Aggressive or fearful in demand for privacy.

Draws genitals on human figures for artistic expression or because figure is being portrayed in the nude.

Genitals stand out as most prominent feature of drawing. Drawings of intercourse, group sex, sex with animals, sadism, masochism, etc.

Erections.

Painful erections or hurting oneself to stop erections.

Red Flag Behavior- Seek professional help if there are sudden/out of usual:

- Changes in appetite (increase or decrease)
- Changes in bathing preferences/ fears about bathing or undressing
- Frequent angry outbursts
- Feelings of depression
- Difficulty sitting or walking
- Refusal to engage in physical activities
- Regressive behaviors based on age (e.g., returning to thumb-sucking or bed-wetting)
- Hesitation to be alone with specific individuals
- Increase in Sexual behavior
- Increase in nightmares or other sleep disturbances
- Increase in anxiety and social withdrawal
- Sexual knowledge, language, or behaviors that are inappropriate or advanced for their age

Seek IMMEDIATE help if:

- Unexplained blood or bleeding
- Torn clothing
- Symptoms of sexually transmitted infection
- Bruising

Number to contact in case of concern: _____