



Sexual Development: What should children know?

By age five, children should:

Use correct words for all sexual body parts.

- Be able to understand what it means to be male or female.
- Understand that their bodies belong to themselves, and they have a right to say “No” to unwanted touch.
- Know where babies come from; how they “get in” and “get out.”
- Be able to talk about body parts without feeling “naughty.”
- Be able to ask trusted adults questions about sexuality.
- Know that “sex talk” is for private times at home.

Elementary school children (Ages 6-9) should:

- Be aware that all creatures grow and reproduce.
- Be aware that sexuality is important at all ages, including at their parents’ and grandparents’ ages, and that it changes over time.

- Know and use proper words for body parts—their own and those of the opposite sex.
- Understand that there are many kinds of caring family types, so that they do not see one single type as the only possible one.
- Be aware that sexual identity includes sexual orientation: lesbian, gay, heterosexual, or bisexual.
- Understand the basic facts about AIDS.
- Take an active role in managing their body’s health and safety.

Nine- to thirteen-year-olds should be informed about:

Human reproduction

- Understand that human sexuality is a natural part of life (by 12-13).
- Be aware that sexual feelings are normal and OK.
- Know how babies are made and what behaviors are likely to lead to pregnancy.

human development

- Know what abortion is.
- Know how male and female bodies grow and differ.

Contraception

- Know that it is possible to plan parenthood.
- Understand that having a child is a long-term responsibility, and every child deserves mature, responsible, loving parents.
- Be aware that contraceptives (birth control methods) exist (and should be able to name some).

The changes they can expect in their bodies before puberty (ages 9-11)

- Know how normal developmental changes begin, including normal differences in when those events occur for males and females.
- Understand the general stages of the body's growth.
- Understand the facts about menstruation and wet dreams.
- Know that emotional changes are very common during this time.

How behavior can be seen as sexual, and how to deal with sexual behavior (by 12-13)

- Know how to recognize and protect themselves against potential sexual abuse, and how to react to such dangers.
- Be able to recognize male and female prostitution and its dangers.

Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)

- Know what they are.
- Understand how a person can get those diseases.
- Be aware of how a person can protect him or herself from them.
- Know how STDs are treated.

Look for more detailed information, as well as information about what older teens should know and understand about sexuality.

<http://www.plannedparenthood.org/Library/sexualityeducation/whatchildrenshould.htm>

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