**Age appropriate sexual behaviours**

Sex play and sexual behaviour is normal in children and young people. This category of age appropriate behaviours (identified by the green colour) does not require intervention by caregivers and professionals. Children readily take redirection of these behaviours. The accompanying emotions and expressions of age appropriate sexual play include laughter, spontaneity, curiosity and experimentation.

**Concerning sexual behaviours**

The following behaviours (identified in orange) signal the need to notice the frequency and persistence of these behaviours. If a child or young person exhibits several of these behaviours and/or these behaviours continue despite clear requests to stop, seek professional advice (see sections on Context of sexual behaviours and Referrals).

**Very concerning sexual behaviours**

The following behaviours (identified in red) are indicative of very concerning sexual behaviour. Most of these behaviours require immediate professional advice, particularly if the sexual behaviour is accompanied by secrecy, anxiety, tension, coercion, force, compulsion and threats

# 0-4 years: Infant, toddler and pre-school

## Age appropriate sexual behaviours

* Touching or rubbing her/his own genitals
* Likes to be nude
* Showing others his or her genitals
* Playing doctors or nurses
* Playing mummies or daddies
* Touching or looking at private parts of other children or familiar adults
* Using slang words/dirty language for bathroom and sexual functions eg 'shit' or 'fuck', talking about 'sexing'.

## Concerning sexual behaviours

* Persistent masturbation which does not cease when told to stop it
* Forcing another child to engage in sexual play
* Sexualised play with dolls eg 'humping' a teddy bear
* Touching the private parts of adults not known to the child
* Chronic peeping behaviour

## Very concerning sexual behaviours

* Persistently touches or rubs self to the seclusion of normal childhood activities, hurts own genitals by rubbing or touching
* Simulating sex with other children with or without clothes on
* Oral sex
* Sexual play involving forceful, anal or vaginal penetration with objects

# 5 -7 year: Early school years

## Age appropriate sexual behaviours

* Self touching including masturbating
* Show me yours/I'll show you mine with same age children
* Like to hear and tell age appropriate dirty jokes
* Playing mummies and daddies
* Kissing/holding hands
* Mimicking or practicing observed behaviours eg pinching a bottom

## Concerning sexual behaviours

* Continually rubbing/touching own genitals in public
* Persistent use of dirty words
* Wants to play sex games with much older or younger children
* Continually wants to touch private parts of other children
* Chronic peeping behaviour

## Very concerning sexual behaviours

* Touches or rubs self persistently in private or public to the exclusion of normal childhood activities
* Rubbing genitals on other people
* Forcing other children to play sexual games
* Sexual knowledge too great for age
* Talks about sex and sexual acts habitually

# 8-12 years: Pre-adolescent

## Age appropriate sexual behaviours

* Occasional masturbation
* Show me yours/I'll show you mine with peers
* Kissing and flirting
* Genital or reproduction conversations with peers
* Dirty words or jokes with peer group

## Concerning sexual behaviours

* Attempting to expose others' genitals
* Sexual knowledge to great for age once context is considered
* Pre-occupation with masturbation
* Single occurrence of peeping, exposing **\*** obscenities, pornographic interest (sources include the internet, pay TV, videos, DVDs and magazines)
* Stimulating foreplay or intercourse with peers with clothes on

## Very concerning sexual behaviours

* Compulsive masturbation, including task interruption to masturbate
* Repeated or chronic peeping, exposing obscenities
* Chronic pornographic interest (child pornography **\***, sources include the internet, pay TV, videos, DVDs and magazines)
* Degradation/humiliation of self using sexual themes
* Degradation/humiliation of others using sexual themes
* Touching genitals of others without permission **\***
* Sexually explicit threats - written or verbal **\***
* Forced exposure of others' genitals **\***
* Simulating intercourse with peers with clothes off.
* Penetration of dolls, children or animals **\***

# 13 - 18 years: Adolescents

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## Age appropriate sexual behaviours

* Sexually explicit conversations with peers
* Obscenities and jokes within the cultural norm
* Sexual innuendo and flirting
* Solitary masturbation
* Kissing, hugging, holding hands
* Foreplay with mutual informed consent and peer aged partner
* Sexual intercourse plus full range of sexual activity

## Concerning sexual behaviours

* Sexual preoccupation or anxiety
* Pornographic interests  
  (sources include the internet, pay TV, videos, DVDs and magazines)
* Promiscuity
* Verbal sexually aggressive themes or obscenities
* Invasion of other's body space

## Very concerning sexual behaviours

* Compulsive masturbation (especially chronic or public **\***)
* Degradation/humiliation of self using sexual themes
* Degradation/humiliation of others using sexual themes
* Chronic preoccupation with sexually aggressive pornography  
  (sources include the internet, pay TV, videos, DVDs and magazines)
* Child pornography **\***
* Attempting to expose others' genitals
* Touching others' genitals without permission **\***
* Sexually explicit threats (verbal or written) **\***
* Obscene phone calls, exhibitionism, voyeurism, sexual harassment **\***
* Sexual contact with significantly younger people **\***
* Sexual contact with animals **\***
* Forced penetration **\***