Sexualized Behaviors

Preschool-Age Children

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Natural/Healthy | Of Concern | Seek Professional Help |
| Touches/rubs own genitals when diapers are being changed, when going to sleep, when tense/excited/afraid or because it feels good | Continues to touch/rub genitals in public after being told “no” consistently  | Touches/rubs self to the exclusion of normal childhood activities. Hurts own genitals by touching/rubbing |
| Explores differences between males and females, boys and girls. | Continuous questions on genital differences after all questions have been answered. | Plays male or female roles in angry, sad or aggressive manner. Hates own or other sex. |
| Touches the “private parts” of familiar adults and children with hand or body. | Touches/rubs the “private parts” of familiar children or adults after they have been told consistently not to do so. | Sneakily touches/rubs the “private parts”of adults or children and, if questioned, deny it. |
| Takes advantage of opportunity to look at nude people. | Stares at nude people even after having seen many people nude. | Asks people to take off their clothes. Tries to forcibly undress people. |
| Asks about the genitals, breasts, intercourse, babies. | Keeps asking people even after parent has answered all questions at an age appropriate level. | Asks unfamiliar people after parent has answered all questions. Sexual knowledge too great for age. |
| Erections | Very frequent erections | Fearful of erections |
| Likes to be nude. May show others his/her genitals. | Wants to be nude in public after the parent repeatedly and consistently says no. | Refuses to put on clothes. Secretly shows “private parts” in public after being told no. |
| Interested in watching people doing bathroom functions. | Interest in watching bathroom functions does not wane after days/weeks. | Refuses to leave people alone in bathroom. Forces way into bathroom. |
| Interested in having/birthing a baby | Boys’ interest does not wane after several days/weeks of play about babies. | Displays fear or anger about babies, birthing or intercourse. |
| Child stand/sits too close to familiar adults and children. | Child stand/sits too close to unfamiliar adults and children. | With consistent reminders the child still stands/sits with familiar/unfamiliar adults resulting in person being uncomfortable |
| Uses “dirty” words for bathroom or sexual functions. | Uses “dirty” words at home after parent consistently says no - parents don’t swear.  | Uses “dirty” words in public and home after strong scoldings - parents do not swear.  |
| Interested in own feces. | Smears feces on walls or floor more than one time. | Repeatedly plays/smears feces after scolding. Angry when doing the behavior. |
| Plays “doctor” inspecting others’ bodies, including “private parts”.  | Frequently plays “doctor” and gets caught, after being told no consistently. | Forces child to take off clothes and play “doctor”.  |
| Puts something in own genitals or rectum one time for curiosity or exploration. | Puts/tries to put something in genitals or rectum of self or other after being told “no”.  | Uses coercion, force, pain in putting something in genitals/rectum of self or other. |
| Plays house, acts out roles of mommy and daddy. | Humping other children with clothes on after being told not to. | Simulated or real intercourse without clothes; oral genital contact.  |

Kindergarten through Fourth Grade

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Natural/Healthy | Of Concern | Seek Professional Help |
| Asks about the genitals, breasts, intercourse, babies. | Shows fear or anxiety about sexual topics.  | Asks endless questions about sex after curiosity satisfied. Sexual knowledge too advanced for age. |
| Interested in watching/peeking at people during bathroom functions. | Keeps getting caught watching/peeking at others doing bathroom functions. | Refuses to leave people alone in the bathroom. |
| Uses “dirty” words for bathroom functions, gential and sexual behavior. | Uses “dirty” words with adults after the parent consistently says “no” and punishes child. | Continuously uses “dirty” language even after punishment and parents do not use these words. |
| Plays “doctor.” The child inspects another child’s body including private parts. | Frequently plays “doctor’ and gets caught after being told not to do so. | Forces child to take clothes off and touches/inserts something into child’s private parts. |
| Boys and girls are interesting in having a baby.  | Boy keeps playing that he is having a baby after month(s). | Child displays fear or anger about babies or intercourse. |
| Touches/rubs own genitals when going to sleep, when tense, excited, afraid or because it feels good. Shows others genitals in private location. | Shows genitals in public. Continues to touch/rub genitals in public after being told no. Rubs genitals on furniture or other objects after being told no.  | Shows genitals at school and/or other places to express anger or distain for authority.  |
| Plays house, may simulate roles of mommy and daddy. | Repeatedly humping other children with clothes on. Repeatedly initiates sexual behavior with toys. | Humping others while naked. Intercourse with another child. Forcing sexual contact on a child or adult. |
| Thinks other gender children are “gross” or “cooties”  | Continues to use “dirty” language after other children really complain. | Uses bad language against other child’s family. Makes sexual threats. |
| Talks about sex with friends. Talks about having a boy/girl friend. | Sex talk gets child in trouble. Romanticizes or sexualizes all relationships. | Talks about sex and sexual acts habitually. Repeatedly in trouble for sexual talk. |
| Wants privacy when in the bathroom or changing clothes. | Becomes very upset when observed changing clothes, using the toilet or bathing. | Aggressive or fearful in demand for privacy. |
| Likes to hear or tell “dirty” jokes.  | Keeps getting caught telling “dirty” jokes or making sexual sounds (moans, sighs)  | Gets caught telling “dirty” jokes or making sexual sounds even after punishment. |
| Plays games with same aged children related to sex or sexuality. | Wants to play games related to sex with older, younger or unknown children. | Child forces others to play sexual games that make them feel uncomfortable. |
| Draws genitals on human figures for artistic expression or because figure is nude.  | Draws genitals on some, but not all nude figures or on people with clothes. Genitals disproportionate to size of body. | Genitals stand out as most prominent feature of drawing. Drawings of intercourse, group sex, sex with animals, sadism, etc.  |
| Explores differences between adult males, females, boys and girls. | Confused about male/female differences after all questions have been answered.  | Plays male/female roles in sad, angry or aggressive manner exclusively. |
| Takes advantage of opportunity to look at nude people.  | Stares/sneaks to stare at nude people after being told no or seeing many nude people. | Asks others to take off their clothes. Tries to forcibly undress children or adults.  |
| Pretends to be opposite gender.  | Talks very negatively about own gender. | Hates/fears being own gender. Hates own genitals. |
| Wants to compare genitals with peer-aged friends. | Wants to compare genitals with much older or younger people. | Demands to see the genitals, breasts or buttocks of others. |
| Looks at the genitals, buttocks or breasts of others. | Stares at the genitals, breasts or buttocks of others making them uncomfortable. | Continuously sneaks/peeks at genitals, breasts or buttocks of others after being caught many times. |
| Interest in touching genitals, breasts or buttocks of other same-age child or have child touch his/hers. | Makes others uncomfortable by requests to touch their genitals, breasts, or buttocks or have them touch his/her private parts. | Coerces unwilling child to touch his/her private parts. Forced or mutual oral, anal or vaginal sex. |
| Kisses/hugs familiar adults and children. Allows kisses/hugs by familiar adults and children. | French kissing. Talks/acts in a sexual manner with unknown children. Fearful of hugs and kisses by familiar adults. Anxious when seeing displays of affection. Kisses/hugs unfamiliar adult or child. | Talks/acts sexually with known or unknown adult or child that makes them feel uncomfortable. Physical contact with any adult causes agitation, anger, fear, or anxiety.  |
| Looks at nude pictures on Internet, videos, magazines, etc. | Continuous fascination with nude pictures that gets child in trouble. | Wants to masturbate to nude pictures or display them. |
| Erections | Continuous erections or fear of erections. | Painful erections or hurting self to stop erection. |
| Puts something in own genitals/rectum for the physical sensation, curiosity or exploration. | Puts something in own genitals/rectum frequently or when it feels uncomfortable. Puts something in the genitals/rectum of other child.  | Coercion or force putting/trying to put something in genitals/rectum of other child. Causes harm to own/others genitals/rectum. |
| Interest in breeding behavior of animals | Touching genitals of animals. | Sexual behaviors with animals.  |

[[1]](#footnote-1)

1. Copyright 2011 Toni Cavanagh Johnson, Ph.D. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)