

# Childhood development and sexual behavior

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Childhood behavior and sexual development Affiliation: There are several sexual behaviors associated with the infancy period which lasts from 0-2 years. These sexual behaviors are not as a result of sexual responses but are just reflexes just like suckling is a reflex at this point in a child's life. In boys, the sexual reflexes include involuntary erection which is visible to others and especially the parents when bathing or changing the baby's nappy. In girls, it is not easily visible but there is vaginal lubrication. Some babies also experience muscular contractions that are similar to orgasm but are involuntary. As the infants approach 2 years, they start masturbating and playing with their genitals and this is so especially for the boys.

When the child is between 3-8 years, they start becoming curious about their bodies and hence start sexually exploring their bodies and that of the opposite sex. They masturbate after discovering their vaginas and penis touch the genitals of the opposite sex and even the buttocks. Some children at this point like touching their mothers breasts just in the process of exploration. Also in the process of exploration, they look at others when they are undressing and try to determine what the difference between them is.

At the preadolescent stage which lasts between 9-13 years, the curiosity has reduced but the girls and boys still mutually expose their genitals for each to see but not touch. Masturbation also continues at this stage though it is much higher for boys than for girls due to the social norms. At this stage, the sexes start pairing with their own sexes and heterosexual relationships do not start developing until later in adolescent period.

During adolescence from age 13, secondary sexual characteristics begin developing in both boys and girls hence girls develop breast and pubic hair while boys start experiencing wet dreams. The sexual behaviors at this stage

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include masturbation, oral sex and sexual intercourse between the boys and girls. Many engage in intercourse due to peer pressure and others out of curiosity but the consequences are teen pregnancy and even sexually transmitted diseases.

### Conclusion

Parents therefore need to be aware of the sexual behaviors in each developmental stage so as to know how to effectively deal with them. The most risky sexual behaviors are those during adolescence because of their dire consequences.

### References

Spencer A. R. (et al). (2011). Human Sexuality in a World of Diversity. New York: Pearson Education, Inc.