**NSPCC**

1. **The stages of normal sexual behaviour**

There are 4 phases of childhood sexual development. Just like every other part of growing up, some children mature sooner or later than others. So, don't be too worried if your child doesn't act exactly as you'd expect.

Children with developmental delays may not stick to these age guides. If you're worried about anything you should speak to a health professional about it.

1. **[Infancy from 0 to 4 years(Tab content expanded)](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-abuse-and-neglect/harmful-sexual-behaviour/signs-symptoms-effects/)**

Even at this stage, sexual behaviour is beginning to emerge through actions like:

* kissing and hugging
* showing curiosity about private body parts
* talking about private body parts and using words like poo, willy and bum
* playing "house" or "doctors and nurses" type games with other children
* touching, rubbing or showing off their genitals or masturbating as a comforting habit.
1. **[Young children from 5 to 9 years(Tab content expanded)](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-abuse-and-neglect/harmful-sexual-behaviour/signs-symptoms-effects/)**

As children get a little older they become more aware of the need for privacy while also:

* kissing and hugging
* showing curiosity about private body parts but respecting privacy
* talking about private body parts and sometimes showing them off
* trying to shock by using words like poo, willy and bum
* using swear and sex words they've heard other people say
* playing "house" or "doctors and nurses" type games with other children
* touching, rubbing or showing others their private parts
1. **[Pre-adolescents from 10 to 12 years(Tab content expanded)](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-abuse-and-neglect/harmful-sexual-behaviour/signs-symptoms-effects/)**

Children are getting more curious about sex and sexual behaviour through:

* kissing, hugging and 'dating' other children
* being interested in other people's body parts and the changes that happen in puberty
* asking about relationships and sexual behaviour
* looking for information about sex, this might lead to finding [online porn](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/online-porn/)
* masturbating in private

### [Adolescents from 13 to 16 years(Tab content expanded)](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-abuse-and-neglect/harmful-sexual-behaviour/signs-symptoms-effects/)

As puberty kicks in, sexual behaviour becomes more private with:

* kissing, hugging, dating and forming longer-lasting relationships
* being interested in and asking questions about body parts, relationships and sexuality
* using sexual language and talking about sex with friends
* looking for sexual pictures or [online porn](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/online-porn/)
* masturbating in private and experimenting sexually with the same age group

If you're unsure whether a behaviour is healthy, Brook provide a helpful, easy to use [traffic light tool](https://www.brook.org.uk/our-work/category/sexual-behaviours-traffic-light-tool). The traffic light system is used to describe healthy (green) sexual behaviours, potentially unhealthy (amber) sexual behaviours and unhealthy (red) sexual behaviours.

The tool suggests what kind of attention and response you should give to each type of behaviour. And it suggests what kind of help might be necessary to ensure the child's safety. The tool can be used by parents and professionals.

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-abuse-and-neglect/harmful-sexual-behaviour/signs-symptoms-effects/>