

- Forcing another child to engage in sexual play
- Simulating sex with other children (clothed or unclothed)
- Sexual play involving forceful anal or vaginal penetration with objects

Children 5-7

- Continually wanting to touch the private parts of other children
- Wanting to play sex games with much older or younger children
- Touching/rubbing themselves persistently in private/public to the exclusion of normal activities
- Talking about sex/sex acts habitually
- Forcing other children to play sex games

Children 8-12

- Attempting to expose others' genitals
- Simulating foreplay or intercourse with peers with their clothes on
- Degradation/humiliation of themselves/others using sexual themes
- Sexually explicit threats that are written or verbal
- Forced exposure of others' genitals
- Simulating intercourse without clothes
- Penetration of dolls, children or animals

Effects of Problematic Sexual Behaviour on Children

- Problematic sexual behaviour can cause children to feel stressed, anxious and angry
- Nightmares, sleep problems and a fear of the dark can be common reactions
- They may refuse to go near the child that is using problematic sexual behaviours, or show distress when near the child
- They may revert to behaviours of a much younger child, such as bed wetting
- Children who have been affected by problematic sexual behaviours can be supported by professional therapeutic assistance.

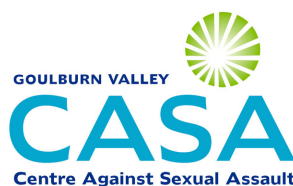
For Support and Advice:

1800 112 343 (24/7)

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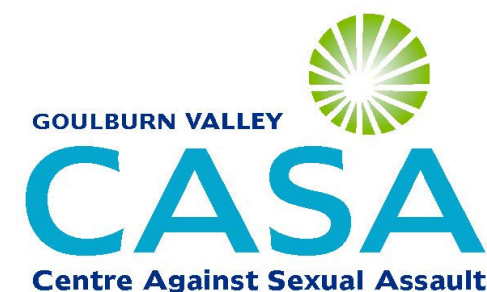


This pamphlet was produced by GVCASA, 2018.

GVCASA provides therapeutic counselling, advocacy and support to people who have experienced sexual assault and their family and friends. GVCASA does not provide services to adult perpetrators.

Information contained in this pamphlet was taken from "Sexualised Children" by Eliana Gill Ph.D & Tony Cavanagh Johnson, Ph.D (1999) & "Children with Problem Sexual Behaviours & their Families" by the Victorian Government Department of Human Services (2012).

GVCASA is a program of Goulburn Valley Health.



What is the difference between appropriate and problematic sexual behaviour in children?

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Children's Sexual Behaviour

Children are curious about their world. They want to know about other children's bodies in the same way they want to know where the sun goes at night.



Some Examples of Appropriate Sexual Behaviours by Age

Age appropriate, exploratory sexual behaviour between children can be entered into willingly by children who are friends and is lighthearted and spontaneous.

Children can feel excited, silly and giggly, and may feel confused and guilty; but not deep shame, fear or anxiety.

It usually stops when boundaries are explained to children and can be dealt with successfully by parents or teachers.

Children 0-4

- Enjoying being nude
- Touching or rubbing their own genitals
- Showing others their genitals
- Playing doctors and nurses
- Playing mummies and daddies
- Touching or looking at the private parts of other children or familiar adults
- Using slang words/dirty language for bathroom and sexual functions

Children 5-7

- Touching their private parts including masturbating
- "Show me yours, I'll show you mine" with same-age children
- Hearing and telling age appropriate "dirty" jokes
- Playing mummies and daddies
- Kissing/holding hands
- Mimicking or practicing observed behaviours such as pinching a bottom

Children 8-12

- 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 their peer group



Problematic Sexual Behaviour

Problematic sexual behaviours in children contain themes of force, threat and dominance.

Emotional threats, such as "I won't play with you if you tell", are used to coerce other children into these activities.

Children who use problematic sexual

behaviours can be agitated, anxious, fearful and intense. Sexual behaviour becomes the focus of their life. They may know more about sexual behaviour than their peers.

Up to the age of 12, children who use problematic sexual behaviours can be younger and smaller than the children they target.

Children can develop problematic sexualised behaviours and this may be an indicator of sexual abuse experiences the child has not yet been able to disclose as they are unable to verbalise what may have happened to them.

The problematic sexual behaviour stems from their confusion, anger, shame and anxiety at being sexually abused.



Some Examples of Concerning to Very Concerning Sexual Behaviours by Age

Please note: There may be some cross over between the ages and stages for children exhibiting problematic sexual behaviours.

Children 0-4

- Persistent masturbation that doesn't cease when told to stop