



CPRI

SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR TEAM

Promoting Safety and Sexual Health

Your Child's Development 3-4 Years of Age

Physical Development

- Slow and steady period of growth.

Developmental Changes

- Child may wish for special relationship with opposite sex parent and compete with parent of the same sex. (e.g. "I'm going to marry you.")
- Child more independent – sees him/herself as a separate person. Family attitudes remain the primary source of child's self esteem and sense of security.
- Imitation of adult behavior.
- Amused by excretory functions and will use language that family members use; Excellent time to learn proper labels and functions of body parts.
- Some curiosity about babies, pregnancy and the birth process.
- Use of obscenities and repetition of "curse" words. Children learn from modelling.
- The focus of pleasurable sensations shifts from the oral area (e.g. Putting toys into their mouth) to the genital and anal zone (e.g. Being curious about bodily functions); therefore, toilet training becomes a major event.

Normative Sexual Behaviours

- Increasingly curious about bodies.
- Understands that they are boy or girl, but may pretend to be of the opposite gender.
- Inquisitive about body differences (i.e. play 'doctor', undress dolls).
- Express interest in words associated with bathroom behaviors (toilet talk).
- Start to ask sexually related questions (i.e. "Where did I come from?").
- Family values and appropriate modeling are very important.

