



## COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

- > Explores own body in public and private
- > Focusses on breasts because of association with feeding
- > Learns about love and trust through touching and holding
- > Explores through touch

## PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

- > Discovers body through looking and feeling
- > Grows quickly



## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



- > Forms a positive self-image
- > Becomes self-aware
- > Notices differences with other children and adults
- > Copies what other people do

# 0-2 YEARS



## EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- > Enjoys physical contact
- > Cuddling and caressing makes them feel safe

## VARIATIONS

- > Children with a disability might develop and react differently.
- > Interact with your child in a way that fits their communication needs according to the impairment



# 0-2 YEARS

## TIPS FOR PARENTS

- › **Teach your child that their bodies are private** - this is even more important for children and young persons with disabilities that may depend a lot on care of others.
- › **Use the correct names for body parts** including reproductive organs as this stimulates a positive body-image, self-confidence and it provides children with the language they need to tell a trusted adult if sexual abuse happened
- › **Stimulate that your child plays with other children their own age**



## COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

- > Curious about their bodies and functions
- > Learns to set boundaries
- > May wish for a special relationship with a parent

## PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

- > Deliberately touching their private parts



## EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- > Learns social and gender norms from peers
- > Copies norms and values from family members and other adults
- > Develops gender identity
- > Likes to talk about body functions

# 3-4 YEARS

## VARIATIONS

- > Children with disabilities may face difficulties in interaction with their peers as they participate in less social activities
- > Match information with physical and emotional development of the child
- > Considering the likelihood of abuse: Make sure the child understands which body parts are private and what privacy means



## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

- > Need for physical contact
- > Curious to see other people and kids naked
- > Learns how people interact by watching people closest to them

# 3-4 YEARS

## TIPS FOR PARENTS

- › **Have a positive attitude towards diversity**
- › **Teach your child what personal boundaries are and that its okay to say no.** Often persons with disabilities are taught to do as they're told. However, they need to know they have the right to say no when they feel their personal boundary is crossed
- › **Practice skills using role play and problem solving,** so your child can practice saying yes and no



## COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

- > Develops ideas about being a boy or a girl
- > Becomes aware of what is considered appropriate behaviour
- > Curious to learn where babies come from
- > Aware of differences between sexes but not interested



## PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

- > Slow and steady growth



# 5-6 YEARS



## EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- > Becomes aware of differences in bodies
- > Gender identity continues to develop
- > Wants more privacy



## VARIATIONS

- > Children with a disability might develop and react differently.
- > Interact with your child in a way that fits their communication needs according to the impairment

## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



- > Develops friendships and relationships (not sexual)
- > Explores own body and compares it with other bodies
- > Learns differences between boys and girls through playing
- > Reinforce gender related behaviour in contact with peers
- > Imitates dating behaviour

# 5-6 YEARS

## TIPS FOR PARENTS

- › **Do not regard to any sexual activity as negative**, rather teach children what appropriate behaviour is in public and private spheres.
- › If you do not talk about sexuality, your child gets the message that **it is something they should not talk about or ask questions about.**
- › When your child asks you a question – **use narrative and stories to help them shape their own opinions**
- › **Use familiar words** (for example, talk about “things you like”) instead of abstract words (like hope, love).

## COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT



- > Asks questions about pregnancy, birth and babies
- > Compares animal and human behaviour
- > Knows how to behave
- > Discovers bodily changes
- > Learns about the importance of hygiene and self-care



## PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

- > Starts to experience physical changes



# 7-8 YEARS



## EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- > Final stages of creating the base of their gender identity
- > Main attachment to people of the same sex
- > Starts to show more independence from parents and family
- > Becomes embarrassed about body
- > Requires more privacy

## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



- > Develops close friendships
- > Becomes aware how others see them
- > Wants to be liked and accepted by peers
- > Likes someone a lot and has crushes

## VARIATIONS

- > Most children show signs of puberty between the ages of 9 and 13, children and young persons with disabilities may develop earlier or later



# 7-8 YEARS

## TIPS FOR PARENTS

- › **Be aware that peers begin to influence how children see themselves.**  
Talk about it and help them understand that differences are okay
- › To help children build their self-esteem, **give them tasks at home they are responsible for**
- › Children are getting information from all kinds of places: it's important to correct wrong information. **Teach them to use the correct names for body parts, types of relationships etc**
- › **Give your child facts about their bodies**



## COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

- > Learns about sexuality from what they see in the media
- > Learns social skills
- > Learns about personal space and hygiene
- > Curious about sex and sexuality



## PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

- > Start of first physical changes.
- > Increase in height
- > Sex hormones become active
- > Boys may start growing reproductive organs
- > Girls may start growing breasts and begin to menstruate



## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



- > First steps towards love: going out, holding hands, kissing cheeks
- > Forms stronger and more complex relationships
- > Hangs out with peers of the same gender

# 9-10 YEARS



## EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- > Feels guilty, confused or embarrassed about changes during puberty
- > Needs more privacy
- > Feels reluctant to talk about sexuality with adults

## VARIATIONS

- > Information about sexual health can be quite overwhelming for children and young persons with disabilities. Provide them with information that focusses on their needs.



# 9-10 YEARS

## TIPS FOR PARENTS

- › **Know that it is natural for children to become curious about sex.**  
Some find it interesting, others find it dirty. Some want to talk about it, others do not. Use this to talk about sexuality and sexual health with your child
- › **Teach children basic information about pregnancy and STI's**
- › **Menstruation and wet dreams can be scary and confusing.**  
Talking with your child beforehand can help make it less scary or confusing
- › **Try not to give a job or chore based on your child's gender**
- › **Use teachable moments to talk about sexuality and sexual health with your child**



## COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

- > Learns about different methods of contraception and how to use them
- > Learns about bodily hygiene and self-examination
- > Growing interest in sexuality due to hormonal changes



## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

- > Takes the first step in loving someone
- > Uses social media for information and interaction



# 11-12 YEARS

## EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT



- > Needs more privacy when undressing
- > Curious about their bodies
- > Worries whether their development is healthy or normal
- > Heavy mood swings



## VARIATIONS

- > Persons with disabilities have often lower self-esteem and may suffer mental health problems which leads to lower or higher sexual desires
- > The physical and sexual responsive adult body of an adolescent with intellectual disabilities might not match with their cognitive, emotional and social development

## PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT



- > Growth of testicles
- > Growth of breasts
- > Girls may start to menstruate

# 11-12 YEARS

## TIPS FOR PARENTS

- › **Know that it is natural for children to become curious about sex.** Some find it interesting, others find it dirty. Some want to talk about it, others do not. Use this to talk about sexuality and sexual health with your child
- › **Teach children basic information about pregnancy and STI's**
- › **Menstruation and wet dreams can be scary and confusing for children, especially for those with disabilities.** Talking with your child beforehand can help make it less scary or confusing
- › **Try not to give a job or chore based on your child's gender**

## PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

- > Body and hormone changes continue 
- > Breast and reproductive organs continue to grow
- > Pubic hair thickens
- > Menstrual periods become regular
- > Men have deeper voices
- > Increased sexual behaviour for pleasure



## COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

- > Growing interest in sexual intercourse
- > Experiments with ways to express sexuality
- > Starts to learn the difference between healthy, unhealthy and abusive relationships

## EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- > Feels anxious about their changing body
- > Is more sensitive or lose their temper more than usual
- > Tends to be influenced by others
- > Relationship with parents become more adult-like, including not showing much affection
- > Desire for sexual experiences brought on by hormone changes

# 13-15 YEARS

## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

- > Worries about how they look
- > Feels sexual desire and stimulate themselves
- > Starts developing romantic relationships

## VARIATIONS

- > Considering the likelihood of abuse: Make sure adolescents with a disability understand which body parts are private and what privacy means



# 13-15 YEARS

## TIPS FOR PARENTS

- › **Teach your child about consent, including negotiation and refusal skills, including relationship skills**
- › **Use teachable moments to talk about sexuality and sexual health with your child.** They are at an age that they can understand information about birth control and the responsibilities of becoming pregnant and being a parent
- › **Normalise periods and wet dreams**
- › **Your child might try to figure out who they are by experimenting with different roles.** Talk about how they feel

## PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

- > Physical and hormonal changes continue
- > Women reach their adult height
- > Hips begin to widen and fat in the buttocks, legs and stomach increases
- > Men continue to grow body and facial hair
- > Men's reproductive organs are fully developed



## COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

- > Knows about pregnancy
- > Develops negotiation and relationship skills
- > Is able to use birth control correctly



## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

- > New desire for sexual experiences
- > Growing interest in romantic relationships and sexuality
- > Figures out who they are by experimenting with different roles
- > Spends less time with parents and more with friends



# 16-18 YEARS

## EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- > Develops stable relationships with peers and adults
- > Starts to define personal values towards sexuality
- > Increases their independence



## VARIATIONS

- > Persons with disabilities have often lower self-esteem and may suffer mental health problems which leads to lower or higher sexual desires
- > For adolescents with disabilities it is more difficult to be independent from others - find ways to stimulate that



# 16-18 YEARS

## TIPS FOR PARENTS

- › **Use teachable moments to talk about sexuality and sexual health with your child.** They are at an age that they can understand information about birth control and the responsibilities of becoming pregnant and being a parent
- › **Teach your child about consent, including negotiation and refusal skills, including relationship skills**
- › **Be aware that your child uses family, peers and societal values as a guide to develop their own norms and values toward sexuality and talk about it without being judgemental**