

# Sexual Behaviours in Young Children (0–6 Years)

Identify • Understand • Respond

## Why this poster matters

This poster helps educators recognise what sexual behaviours are healthy, concerning, or harmful in young children, and how to respond in ways that keep everyone safe. Children communicate through behaviour, especially when they don't yet have the language to express their needs. By understanding the Traffic Lights Framework and using calm, consistent responses, educators can protect children, teach body safety, reduce shame, and create a learning environment where curiosity is supported and boundaries are clear. Every behaviour — green, orange, or red — requires a response, and your confident intervention makes a meaningful difference to children's wellbeing.

### ● GREEN LIGHT BEHAVIOURS

Healthy, age-appropriate, curious, mutual, easily redirected

#### Examples:

- Curious questions about bodies
- "Doctor" play
- Touching own genitals
- Giggling about body words
- Comparing bodies
- Comfort with nudity

#### Educator Response:

- Stay calm, give facts
- Teach privacy rules
- Redirect gently
- Praise appropriate behaviour
- Use correct anatomical names

### ● ORANGE LIGHT BEHAVIOURS

Concerning, persistent, secretive, or involving power differences

#### Examples:

- Persistent nudity after redirection
- Repeated sexual play
- Explicit sexual talk
- Touching others' genitals
- Trying to touch adults inappropriately

#### Educator Response:

- Stop behaviour calmly
- Ask open-ended questions
- Increase supervision
- Document the behaviour
- Inform supervisor

### ● RED LIGHT BEHAVIOURS

Harmful, coercive, forceful, secretive, degrading, or developmentally inappropriate

#### Examples:

- Forcing sexual activity on another child
- Touching under clothing
- Simulated sexual acts
- Coercion or threats
- Large age/power differences
- Disclosures of abuse

#### Educator Response:

- Stop immediately
- Separate children
- Ensure safety of all children
- Document thoroughly
- Report to supervisor
- Report to authorities

### WHAT DO COERCION AND THREATS LOOK LIKE?

#### Coercion

Pressure or manipulation:

- Bribing with toys/treats
- "You have to or I won't be your friend"
- Persistent pressure after refusal

#### Threats

Fear or intimidation:

- "I'll hurt you if you tell"
- "I'll break your toy"
- Physical intimidation

**Any sexual behaviour involving coercion or threats is RED.**

### USING ACCURATE ANATOMICAL LANGUAGE (SAFETY PRACTICE)

Use correct terms: **penis, vulva, vagina, bottom, chest, nipples, testicles**

This helps children describe unsafe touch, disclose abuse, reduces shame, and builds trust between educators and families.

### HOW TO REDIRECT BEHAVIOUR (SIMPLE SCRIPT)

*"I can see you're curious about bodies. That's okay — bodies are interesting! But touching penis/vagina is something we do in private, not at childcare. Let's find something else to do. Would you like to [activity]?"*

## NEVER DO NOTHING — EVERY BEHAVIOUR NEEDS A RESPONSE



**GREEN**

Identify → State rule → Redirect



**ORANGE**

Ask questions → Gather info → Monitor



**RED**

Stop → Ensure safety → Report

**All behaviour communicates a need. Your calm, confident response protects children.**



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