



**AGES 2–5**

# **A Parent and Caregiver's Guide to Healthy Sexual Development**

**Toddlers and pre-schoolers** are discovering their bodies and learning independence.

Curiosity about body parts, gender differences, and affection is **normal** — not sexual in the adult sense.

Your calm, honest answers build body confidence and trust.



## What's Normal at 2–5

### Physical

Learns to walk, run, climb, dress, and feed themselves.

### Cognitive

Asks endless “why” questions; enjoys pretend play and stories.

### Social & Emotional

Begins sharing, empathy, and friendship; seeks adult approval.



### Sexual Development

- Notices body differences and asks simple questions.
- Touches or looks at own or others' bodies out of curiosity.
- Plays “doctor” or “house”.
- Starts to understand privacy and modesty.
- May use new words for private parts — testing reactions.

**Remember, at this age, curiosity is healthy.**

When you respond with openness and warmth, your child learns that their body is good, private, and worth protecting.



## How You Can Help

### **Answer Calmly.**

Use real names for all body parts (penis, vulva, and bottom). Short, honest answers work best.

### **Teach Privacy and Respect.**

Explain that private parts are covered by underwear and not for others to touch, except for cleaning or health care.

### **Model Consent.**

Ask before hugs or tickles, and respect their “no”. Children learn boundaries by watching adults.

### **Encourage Curiosity, Not Shame.**

Stay relaxed when they ask or explore.

Curiosity means learning — not misbehaviour.

### **Reinforce Body Safety Rules.**

- “My body belongs to me.”
- “I can say NO to touch.”
- “No secrets about touching.”
- “I can always tell a safe adult.”



## When to Seek Help

Reach out if your child:

- Shows persistent or aggressive sexualised behaviour.
- Acts out adult-like sexual acts or secretive play.
- Seems fearful, withdrawn, or anxious.
- Regresses (bedwetting, clinginess, loss of skills).

Stay calm, reassure them, and seek professional help if needed.





## Children and Adolescents with Special Needs

Children and adolescents with developmental disabilities are also sexual beings, and like non-disabled children, they also need to understand their bodies and relationships.

They go through the same stages of physical and emotional development as others, though some may experience puberty earlier or later.

They may need extra help to understand privacy, consent, and appropriate behaviour.

Use clear language, visual cues, and gentle repetition to teach about body boundaries and safety.

**Every child — regardless of ability, gender, or sexuality — has the right to know about their body, relationships, and personal safety.**

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### ABOUT US

**Dil Se** is an NGO working for the Prevention and Healing of Child Sexual Abuse in Kochi, Kerala.

Founded in Switzerland in 2000 by Marina Racine and Cristelle Hart Singh, and later established in India as a Trust in 2009, Dil Se works to protect children, educate communities, and support healing for survivors.

### OUR VISION

A world where child sexual abuse is a thing of the past

### OUR MISSION

Prevention and Healing of Child Sexual Abuse



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