



What does media have to do with young children's sexual behaviors and beliefs?

Children at this age are often unconcerned with issues around sex and romantic relationships. Exposure to sexual content and references in the media should be limited and developmentally appropriate. This tip sheet can help you monitor and guide your children's media choices in order to optimize their health and development.

How can media affect sexual behaviors and beliefs?

- * Frequent exposure to sexual content can affect young children's beliefs and attitudes towards sex, romantic relationships, and gender roles.
- ★ Accidental and even one-time exposure to sexual content and references in the media may scare and/or confuse young children.
- ◆ Young children may start to learn about sexual behavior and norms from media if no other sources of reliable information are available to them.
- ❖ Some media industries can sexualize children through toys, clothing, etc. Exposure to media containing developmentally inappropriate portrayals of sexual behaviors and attitudes can lead to riskier behavior in later childhood and adolescence.



What can I do?

- * Read reviews, summaries and ratings, or watch trailers and clips of media before allowing your child to watch, read or play.
- ★ Internet filtering software can help prevent children from accidentally finding inappropriate content online. When possible, watch, read or play *with* your children, to help explain images, words, and behavior that they find confusing.
- ◆ Provide a variety of appropriate resources that illustrate reliable information about healthy sexual behaviors and beliefs. The media you consume in their presence can affect how they view sex and sexuality, so be sure that it is developmentally appropriate if they are close by.
- ❖ Talk to your kids about the sexualized messages they see in the media. Highlight positive media message while deemphasizing negative ones. Limiting exposure to advertisements and buying your child developmentally appropriate toys and clothes can also help.

Where can I find more information?
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