



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

Many children in this age range will begin puberty and become interested in sex and sexual anatomy. Exposure to sexual content and references in the media should be developmentally appropriate to help children develop and maintain healthy attitudes, values and behaviors that promote healthy, safe and appropriate sexual functioning. 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 in media may lead to unreasonable expectations in future romantic relationships and riskier sexual behavior now and in later adolescence.

❖ Children may be drawn to music, websites, movies, and other media that contain inaccurate messages about sex such as pornography, sexually explicit lyrics, and gender stereotyping.

◆ Children at this age become curious about sex and sexual behaviors and may start to learn about these from media if no other sources of reliable information are available to them.

### What can I do?

\* When possible, watch, read or play with your child. This can help you monitor children's media use and help them understand any potential negative consequences associated with the sexual behaviors that are often glamorized in the media.

❖ Teach and encourage your child to use their critical thinking skills to assess, deconstruct, and challenge the meanings associated with the content they are consuming.

◆ Check-in regularly with your child about what she or he is seeing, hearing and wondering about sex. Make available a variety of developmentally appropriate resources that provide reliable information about healthy sexual behaviors and beliefs.

