

This is especially true if the defect interferes with the child's ability to participate in games and activities.

Development of Sexuality

Many children experience some form of sex play during or before preadolescence as a response to normal curiosity, not as a result of love or sexual urges. Children are experimentalists by nature, and sex play is incidental and transitory. Any adverse emotional consequences or guilt feelings depend on how the behavior is managed by the parents. Many parents discourage sexual exploration, either through subtle cues or expressions of anger or disgust at their child's behavior. These tactics clearly communicate to children that they should not engage in such activities, discourage questions about sex, and limit the sources of information.

Sex Education

An important component of ongoing sex education is effective communication with parents. If parents either repress the child's sexual curiosity or avoid dealing with it, the sexual information that the child receives may be acquired almost entirely from peers. A recent study found the majority of parents of preadolescent and adolescent children believed they were open with sex education discussions; however, only a few parents communicated direct information about safe sex practices ([Hyde, Drennan, Butler, et al, 2013](#)). When peers are the primary source of sexual information, it is often transmitted and exchanged in secret conversation and contains misinformation.

Although middle childhood is an ideal time for formal sex education, this subject has created considerable controversy. Many parents and groups are unconditionally opposed to the inclusion of sex education in the schools. When sex education is presented from a life span perspective and treated as a normal part of growth and development, the information is less likely to contain overtones of uncertainty, guilt, or embarrassment that could in turn produce anxiety in children.

Nurse's Role in Sex Education