

**Contact Family Services
278-9111**

Warning Signs of

SEXUAL ABUSE



Know the Signs, Protect Children & Teens

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, one in four females and one in six males will be sexually abused before age 18. The numbers are staggering, yet more than 70 percent of victims will not report the abuse for more than a year, almost 50 percent will not within five years, and many cases are never reported.

Child sexual abuse can have immediate and long-lasting physical, mental, emotional, and social effects on the victims. Sexual abuse can take many forms, including the use of force and coercion. Use this guide to learn the signs and help protect children and teens. Any of these warning signs taken individually does not prove a child is being abused, but clusters of signs can indicate abuse.



Effects of Childhood or Adolescent Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse can cause these problems that last into adulthood.

- Anxiety and emotional disorders, including depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Self-destructive behaviors, including drug and alcohol abuse
- Difficulty having healthy sexual relationships
- Victimized children later in life
- Lifelong social isolation and difficulty developing good social skills
- Lost wages and productivity over the course of a lifetime
- Sleep disorders and anxiety attacks



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Signs of Abuse in Younger Children

- Acting out adult sexual behaviors with stuffed animals, toys, or other children
- Inappropriate references to private body parts or knowledge of sexual acts and situations
- Bed-wetting or soiling incidents
- Older child suddenly behaving like a younger child (e.g., thumb sucking or bed-wetting)
- Frequent touching of child's own or other children's genitals
- Drawing or writing about sexual situations
- Pain when walking, sitting, or urinating, or during bowel movements

Signs of Abuse in Adolescents

- Alcohol and/or drug abuse
- Running away from home
- Self-harm (e.g., cutting, burning, or branding)
- Engaging in risky or promiscuous sexual behavior
- Extreme mood swings
- Developing eating disorders such as anorexia or bulimia
- Cruelty to small animals
- Sudden change in school performance and/or skipping school
- Sexually transmitted infections, pregnancy, or urinary tract infections



Educate Children & Adolescents

- Make sure all children and family members know about normal, healthy sexual development, inappropriate behaviors, and warning signs of abuse.
- Teach children the proper names for body parts and give them strategies to use if an adult tries to touch them inappropriately.
- Teach children that they do not have the right to touch other people's private parts and no one has the right to touch theirs.
- Discuss boundaries and appropriate behaviors with children and teens.
- Be aware of adults who seem to have inappropriate boundaries with children. Do what you can to limit their contact.

If You Suspect Abuse...

- Get involved right away.*
- If you believe a child is in immediate danger, call 911.
 - If a child tells you that he/she has been sexually abused, listen carefully and show you understand. Offer the child help and compassion.
 - If a child is reporting being abused by a family member, report the abuse to your local child protective services office. If the abuse is by a nonfamily member, contact your local police.
 - See that the child is evaluated by a doctor or pediatrician to determine if the abuse resulted in physical injuries.
 - If you have questions about child abuse, contact the National Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-4-A-CHILD (1-800-422-4453).



LET'S LEARN ABOUT



SAFE AND

UNSAFE



TOUCHING!

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You can use your body to have fun and play, and hold hands with people you like every day.

But if someone touches you in an uncomfortable way, these are **NOT** safe touches and are **NOT** OK.

Say "**NO!**" get away, and tell a grown-up you trust if someone gives you an unsafe touch.

Remember, unsafe touches will never do—

Only safe touches are the right ones for you!

