

Definition

Any intentional harm or mistreatment to a child under 18 years old is considered child abuse. Child abuse takes many forms, which often occur at the same time.

1. Physical abuse. Physical child abuse occurs when a child is purposely physically injured or put at risk of harm by another person.
2. Sexual abuse. Sexual child abuse is any sexual activity with a child, such as fondling, oral-genital contact, intercourse or exposure to child pornography.
3. Emotional abuse. Emotional child abuse means injuring a child's self-esteem or emotional well-being. It includes verbal and emotional assault — such as continually belittling or berating a child — as well as isolating, ignoring or rejecting a child.
4. Medical abuse. When someone purposely makes a child sick, requiring medical attention, it puts the child in serious danger of injury and unnecessary medical care. This may be due to a mental disorder called factitious disorder imposed on another, such as a parent harming a child.
5. Neglect. Child neglect is failure to provide adequate food, shelter, affection, supervision, education or medical care.

In many cases, child abuse is done by someone the child knows and trusts — often a parent or other relative. If you suspect child abuse, report the abuse to the proper authorities.

EVERYONE HAS A ROLE
TO PLAY IN PROTECTING
CHILDREN

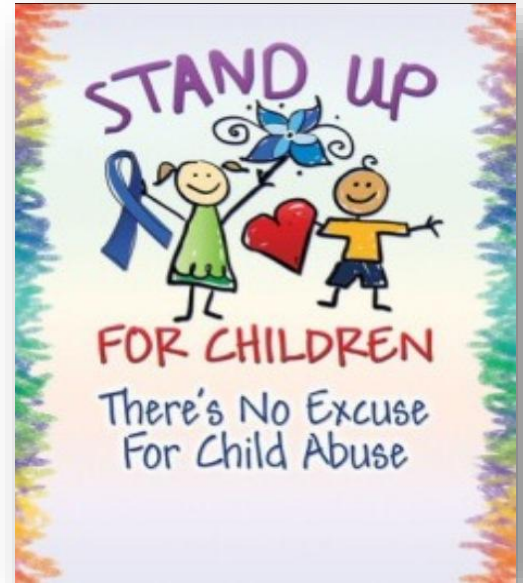


Symptoms

A child who's being abused may feel guilty, ashamed or confused. He or she may be afraid to tell anyone about the abuse, especially if the abuser is a parent, other relative or family friend. In fact, the child may have an apparent fear of parents, adult caregivers or family friends. That's why it's vital to watch for red flags, such as:

- Withdrawal from friends or usual activities
- Changes in behavior — such as aggression, anger, hostility or hyperactivity — or changes in school performance
- Depression, anxiety or unusual fears or a sudden loss of self-confidence
- An apparent lack of supervision
- Frequent absences from school or reluctance to ride the school bus
- Reluctance to leave school activities, as if he or she doesn't want to go home
- Attempts at running away
- Rebellious or defiant behavior
- Attempts at suicide

Specific signs and symptoms depend on the type of abuse and can vary. Keep in mind that warning signs are just that — warning signs. The presence of warning signs doesn't necessarily mean that a child is being abused.



Physical abuse signs and symptoms

- Unexplained injuries, such as bruises, fractures or burns
- Injuries that don't match the given explanation
- Untreated medical or dental problems

Sexual abuse signs and symptoms

- Sexual behavior or knowledge that's inappropriate for the child's age
- Pregnancy or a sexually transmitted infection
- Blood in the child's underwear
- Statements that he or she was sexually abused
- Trouble walking or sitting or complaints of genital pain
- Abuse of other children sexually

News You Can Use

**Please take time during the month of April to visit the H3 exhibit, "Deadly Look-Alikes" in main foyer/ church entrance.



Emotional abuse signs and symptoms

- Delayed or inappropriate emotional development
- Loss of self-confidence or self-esteem
- Social withdrawal or a loss of interest or enthusiasm
- Depression
- Headaches or stomachaches with no medical cause
- Avoidance of certain situations, such as refusing to go to school or ride the bus
- Desperately seeks affection
- A decrease in school performance/loss of interest in school
- Loss of previously acquired developmental skills

Neglect signs and symptoms

- Poor growth or weight gain
- Poor hygiene
- Lack of clothing or supplies to meet physical needs
- Taking food or money without permission
- Eating a lot in one sitting or hiding food for later
- Poor record of school attendance
- Lack of appropriate attention for medical, dental or psychological problems or lack of necessary followup care
- Emotional swings that are inappropriate or out of context to the situation
- Indifference

Parental behavior

Sometimes a parent's demeanor or behavior sends red flags about child abuse. Warning signs include a parent who:

- Shows little concern for the child
- Appears unable to recognize physical or emotional distress in the child
- Denies that any problems exist at home or school, or blames the child for the problems
- Consistently blames, belittles or berates the child and describes the child with negative terms, such as "worthless" or "evil"
- Expects the child to provide him or her with attention and care and seems jealous of other family members getting attention from the child
- Uses harsh physical discipline or asks teachers to do so
- Demands an inappropriate level of physical or academic performance
- Severely limits the child's contact with others
- Offers conflicting or unconvincing explanations for a child's injuries or no explanation at all

Although most child health experts condemn the use of violence in any form, some people still use corporal punishment, such as spanking, as a way to discipline their children. Any corporal punishment may leave emotional scars. Parental behaviors that cause pain or physical injury — even when done in the name of discipline — could be child abuse.

When to see a doctor

If you're concerned that your child or another child has been abused, seek help immediately.

If the child needs immediate medical attention, call 911 or your local emergency number. Depending on the situation, contact the child's doctor, a local child protective agency, the police department, or a 24-hour hotline such as Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline (800-422-4453).

Keep in mind that health care professionals are legally required to report all suspected cases of child abuse to the appropriate county or state authorities.

Risk factors

Factors that may increase a person's risk of becoming abusive include:

- A history of being abused or neglected as a child
- Physical or mental illness, such as depression or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Family crisis or stress, including domestic violence and other marital conflicts, single parenting, or young children in the family, especially several children under age 5

- A child in the family who is developmentally or physically disabled
- Financial stress or unemployment
- Social or extended family isolation
- Poor understanding of child development and parenting skills
- Alcoholism or other forms of substance abuse

Ten Ways to Help Prevent Child Abuse

Have you ever found yourself thinking about the ways in which you can make a difference in a child's life? Here is a list of ten ways to help prevent child abuse that are simple, every day actions that can make a big impact. After you read these tips, check out Connect the Dots to learn more about how you can make a difference and to connect with others in your community who are working to deliver the great childhoods that all children deserve.

1. Be a nurturing parent.

Children need to know that they are special, loved and capable of following their dreams.

2. Help a friend, neighbor or relative.

Being a parent isn't easy. Offer a helping hand take care of the children, so the parent(s) can rest or spend time together.

3. Help yourself.

When the big and little problems of your everyday life pile up to the point you feel overwhelmed and out of control – take time out. Don't take it out on your kid.

4. If your baby cries...

It can be frustrating to hear your baby cry. Learn what to do if your baby won't stop crying. Never shake a baby – shaking a child may result in severe injury or death.

5. Get involved.

Ask your community leaders, clergy, library and schools to develop services to meet the needs of healthy children and families.

6. Help to develop parenting resources at your local library.

Find out whether your local library has parenting resources, and if not, offer to help obtain some.

7. Promote programs in school.

Teaching children, parents and teachers prevention strategies can help to keep children safe.

8. Monitor your child's television, video, and internet viewing/usage.

Excessively watching violent films, TV programs, and videos can harm young children.

9. Volunteer at a local child abuse prevention program.

For information about volunteer opportunities, call 1.800.CHILDREN or contact your local Prevent Child Abuse America chapter.

10. Report suspected abuse or neglect.

If you have reason to believe a child has been or may be harmed, call your local department of children and family services or your local police department. Emergency contacts can be found at the top of the page.

In His Service,
H-3 ministry

⁸We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed, perplexed, but not in despair; ⁹Persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. II Corinthians 4:8-9

resources this issue

Resources: <http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/child-abuse/basics/definition/con-20033789>,

<http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/child-abuse/basics/symptoms/con-20033789>,

<http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/child-abuse/basics/risk-factors/con-20033789>, <http://preventchildabuse.org/resource/ten-ways-to-help-prevent-child-abuse/>

... National Child Abuse Prevention Month ...

Almost 1,600 children die unnecessarily from child abuse and neglect each year.

Children's Bureau 2014

Step up.
Speak up.
Stop it.
Report it!

#StopChildAbuse
AMERICAN
SPCC
National Society for the Positive Care of Children
www.americanspcc.org

The Childhelp National
Child Abuse Hotline
1-800-4-A-CHILD
(1-800-422-4453)

