

Indicators of Sexual Abuse

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Visible signs of physical injury

- torn, stained or bloody underwear
- difficulty walking or sitting
- bruising or blood in or near genital area
- pain, swelling or itching in genital area

Sudden change in behavior

- decreased appetite, chronic stomach aches, vomiting
- irritability, withdrawal, nightmares, bed-wetting
- unusual aggressiveness
- reluctance or refusal to be with a certain person or in a certain place
- fear that something is wrong with genital area

Inappropriate sexualized behavior

- excessive interest or knowledge of sexual acts or language
- acting out sexual behaviors
- persistent sexual play, even after being told to stop
- excessive interest in private body parts, unable to be distracted

The absence of symptoms of sexual abuse does not mean that a child is not being abused. It is possible for a child that is being abused to show no apparent signs. Sexual abuse in any form causes long lasting emotional and psychological damage that can be devastating to a child and family.

While it is our sincere hope that you will never be faced with a sexual abuse situation, we strongly advocate learning the steps for responding to disclosure; a time when a child tells about a possible sexual abuse encounter.