

Understanding Sexual Abuse

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I. Defining sexual abuse and learning the signs

II. Teaching about sexuality

III. Reporting

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I. Personal experience

II. Effective teachers

III. Effective teaching

Signs of abuse: **General Signs of Sexual Abuse (0 to 12 years):**

- overly interested in theirs or other's genitals or wants to touch private parts of other children
- Instigating and/or forcing 'sex play' with another child that is not appropriate
- sex play with another child happening more than three times, despite careful monitoring and discussion about inappropriateness
- persistent masturbation that does not cease when told to stop
- seductive/advanced sexual behavior, sexualized play with dolls or toys
- sexualized play involving forced penetration of objects vaginally or anally
- chronic peeping, exposing and obscenities
- touching or rubbing against the genitals of adults or children that they do not know
- persistent use of 'dirty' words
- describing sexual acts and sexualized behavior beyond their years
- drawings and/or games that involve inappropriate sexual activities
- strong body odor
- sores around the mouth
- bruising or bleeding in the genital area; bruising to breasts, buttocks, lower abdomen or thighs
- withdrawn and anxious behavior (irritable, clingy, listless)
- secretive or say they have a 'special' secret that can't tell (this may be to gauge your reaction)
- Extreme fear of being left alone
- going to bed fully clothed
- increase in nightmares and sleep disturbances
- regressive behavior, e.g. a return to bed-wetting or soiling
- sudden changes in behavior or regress to younger behaviors without identifiable cause, e.g. from a happy child to an angry and/or defiant child, disruptive and aggressive behavior or withdrawal, thumb sucking, bedwetting
- appetite changes (sudden and significant), eating disorders (over or under eating)
- unexplained accumulation of money and gifts
- not wanting to go to a certain person's place or to an activity
- indirectly dropping hints about the abuse

In Older Children (Adolescents):

Note: they may also display some of the above indicators

- self-destructive behavior such as drug dependency, suicide attempts, self-mutilation
- eating disorders
- adolescent pregnancy
- persistent running away from home and/or refusal to attend school
- withdrawn, angry
- saying that their body is dirty, ruin, damaged
- pornography interest; verbally sexually aggressive obscenities

Modified from: <https://e2epublishing.info/blog/2014/5/9/protect-your-child-from-sexual-abuse>