

10

SIGNS OF CHILD ABUSE

- 1 Unexplained injuries.** Visible signs of physical abuse may include unexplained burns or bruises in the shape of objects. You may also hear unconvincing explanations of a child's injuries.
- 2 Changes in behavior.** Abuse can lead to many changes in a child's behavior. Abused children often appear scared, anxious, depressed, withdrawn or more aggressive.
- 3 Returning to earlier behaviors.** Abused children may display behaviors shown at earlier ages, such as thumb-sucking, bed-wetting, fear of the dark or strangers. For some children, even loss of acquired language or memory problems may be an issue.
- 4 Fear of going home.** Abused children may express apprehension or anxiety about leaving school or about going places with the person who is abusing them.
- 5 Changes in eating.** The stress, fear and anxiety caused by abuse can lead to changes in a child's eating behaviors, which may result in weight gain or weight loss.
- 6 Changes in sleeping.** Abused children may have frequent nightmares or have difficulty falling asleep, and as a result may appear tired or fatigued.
- 7 Changes in school performance and attendance.** Abused children may have difficulty concentrating in school or have excessive absences, sometimes due to adults trying to hide the children's injuries from authorities.
- 8 Lack of personal care or hygiene.** Abused and neglected children may appear uncared for. They may present as consistently dirty and have severe body odor, or they may lack sufficient clothing for the weather.
- 9 Risk-taking behaviors.** Young people who are being abused may engage in high-risk activities such as using drugs or alcohol or carrying a weapon.
- 10 Inappropriate sexual behaviors.** Children who have been sexually abused may exhibit overly sexualized behavior or use explicit sexual language.

Some signs that a child is experiencing violence or abuse are more obvious than others. Trust your instincts. Suspected abuse is enough of a reason to contact the authorities. You do not need proof.

IF YOU SUSPECT A CHILD HAS BEEN ABUSED...

- Keep calm.
 - Tell the child you believe them.
 - Show interest and concern.
 - Reassure and support the child.
 - Take action. It could save a child's life.
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- Panic or overreact.
 - Pressure the child.
 - Confront the offender.
 - Blame the child or minimize the child's feelings.
 - Overwhelm the child with questions.

If you suspect a child is in immediate danger, call **911**. In New York, call the New York State Central Registry of Child Abuse and Maltreatment at **800.342.3720**. Outside of New York State, visit www.safehorizon.org for more information.

Safe Horizon

Safe Horizon is the nation's largest and leading victim services organization, touching the lives of 250,000 children, families and individuals every single year.

Our Mission

Safe Horizon's mission is to provide support, prevent violence and promote justice for victims of crimes and abuse, their families and communities.

Our Vision

Safe Horizon envisions a society free of family and community violence. We will lead the way by empowering victims of domestic violence, child abuse, sexual assault and human trafficking to move from crisis to confidence.



moving victims of violence from crisis to confidence

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