

10 Signs of Child Abuse



Our mission is to restore dignity, hope, and trust to children traumatized by abuse and neglect.

- 1. Changes in behavior.** Abuse can lead to many changes in behavior. Abused children often appear scared, anxious, depressed, withdrawn or more aggressive.
- 2. Returning to earlier behaviors.** Abused children may display behaviors shown at earlier ages, such as thumb-sucking, bedwetting, fear of the dark or fear of strangers. For some children, even loss of acquired language or memory problems may be an issue.
- 3. 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 or exhibit an unusual fear of a familiar person or place.
- 4. Changes in eating.** The stress, fear and anxiety caused by abuse can lead to changes in a child's eating behavior, which may result in weight gain or weight loss.
- 5. Changes in sleeping.** Abused children may have frequent nightmares or have difficulty falling asleep and as a result may appear tired or fatigued.
- 6. 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 child's injuries from authorities.
- 7. 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.
- 8. 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.
- 9. Inappropriate sexual behaviors.** Children who have been sexually abused may exhibit overly sexualized behavior or use explicit sexual language and may exhibit symptoms of a genital infection.
- 10. Unexplained injuries.** Children who have been physically abused may exhibit unexplained burns or bruises in the shape of objects. You may also hear unconvincing explanations of a child's injuries.

Be aware that some children may show ALL or NONE of the signs above. Trust your instincts. Suspicion of abuse is enough of a reason to take action.

Child Protective Services 800.252.5400

San Antonio Police Department 911 or 210.207.7273

Bexar County Sheriff's Department 210.335.6000

CHRISTUS Santa Rosa Children's Hospital 210.704.2190

Methodist Specialty and Transplant Hospital 210.575.8168



ChildSafe