

THIS INFORMATION IS FROM:

<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/safety-prevention/at-home/Pages/What-to-Know-about-Child-Abuse.aspx>



Child Abuse and Neglect:

What Parents Should Know



Child abuse, also known as maltreatment, is common. It is important to understand and reduce the risks of abuse for your child and be familiar with the signs of abuse and neglect.

About 4 million cases of child abuse and neglect involving almost 7 million children are reported each year. The highest rate of child abuse is in babies less than one year of age, and 25 percent of victims are younger than age three.

The majority of cases reported to Child Protective Services involve neglect, followed by physical and sexual abuse. There is a lot of overlap among children who are abused, with many suffering a combination of physical abuse, sexual abuse, and/or neglect.

Types of abuse and neglect

Physical abuse occurs when a child's body is injured as a result of hitting, kicking, [shaking](#), burning or other show of force. One study suggests that about 1 in 20 children has been physically abused in their lifetime.

Sexual abuse is any sexual activity that a child cannot understand or consent to. It includes acts such as fondling, oral-genital contact and genital and anal intercourse. It also includes exhibitionism, voyeurism, and exposure to pornography. Studies suggest that up to one in five girls and one in 20 boys will be sexually abused before they are 18 years old. More than 90 percent of child sexual abuse victims know their abuser.

Child neglect can include physical neglect (failing to provide food, clothing, shelter, or other physical necessities), emotional neglect (not providing love, comfort, or affection), and medical or educational neglect (not providing access to needed medical care or education) or supervisory neglect (failure to appropriately supervise). Psychological or emotional abuse results from all of the above, but also can be associated with verbal abuse, which can harm a child's self-worth or emotional well-being.

Risk factors for abuse and neglect

Most child abuse occurs within the family. Risk factors include parental depression or other mental health issues, a parental history of childhood abuse or neglect, parental substance abuse and domestic [violence](#).

Child neglect and other forms of maltreatment are also more common in families living in [poverty](#) and among parents who are teenagers or who abuse drugs or alcohol.

Signs and symptoms

It is not always easy to recognize when a child has been abused. Children who have been maltreated are often afraid to tell anyone, because they think they will be blamed or that no one will believe them. Sometimes they remain quiet because the person who abused them is someone they love very much, or because of fear, or both.

Parents also tend to overlook signs and symptoms of abuse, because it is hard to believe it could happen or they fear what might happen if people found out. However, a child who has been abused needs special support and treatment as early as possible. The longer children continue to be abused or are left to deal with the situation on their own, the harder it is for them to be able to heal and develop optimally physically and mentally.

Here are some physical signs and behavioral changes in children who may have experienced abuse or neglect:

Physical signs

- Non-mobile infant with any injury
- Bruises to the torso, ears, or neck in a child less than four years of age
- Any injury (bruise, burn, [fracture](#), abdominal or [head injury](#)) that is not consistent with the way the injury is said to have happened, that cannot be adequately explained, or that is inconsistent with the child's developmental capabilities
- The child discloses abuse or neglect
- Failure to gain weight (especially in infants) or sudden dramatic weight gain
- Genital pain, bleeding, or discharge
- A sexually transmitted disease

Behavioral and mental health changes that raise concern about possible abuse or neglect

It is important to remember that the following changes are seen in many children as a result of many different kinds of stressful situations and are not specific to child abuse and neglect. The reason for the appearance of these behaviors should always be investigated.

- Fearful behavior (nightmares, [depression](#), unusual fears)
- Unexplained abdominal pain, sudden onset of bed-wetting, or regression in toileting (especially if the child has already been toilet trained)
- Attempts to run away
- Extreme sexual behavior that seems developmentally inappropriate for the child's age
- Sudden change in self-confidence
- Headaches or stomachaches with no medical cause
- School failure
- Extremely passive or aggressive behavior
- Desperately affectionate behavior or social withdrawal
- Big appetite and stealing food

Long-term consequences

In most cases, children who are abused or neglected suffer greater [mental health](#) than physical health damage. Emotional and psychological abuse, physical abuse, and neglect deny the child the tools needed to cope with [stress](#), and to learn new skills to become [resilient](#), strong, and successful. So a child who is maltreated or neglected may have a wide range of reactions and may even become depressed or develop [suicidal](#), withdrawn, or violent behavior. As they get older, they may show learning difficulties, use drugs or alcohol, try to run away, refuse discipline, or abuse others. As an adult, they may develop marital and sexual difficulties, depression, or suicidal behavior.

Not all children who are abused have severe reactions. Usually the younger the child, the longer the abuse continues. The closer the child's relationship with the abuser, the more serious the mental health effects will be. A close relationship with a very supportive adult can increase [resiliency](#), reducing some of the impact.

Getting help

If you suspect your child has been abused, get help immediately through your pediatrician or a local child protective agency. Physicians are legally obligated to report all suspected cases of abuse or neglect to state authorities. Your pediatrician also will detect and treat any medical injuries or conditions, recommend a therapist, and provide necessary information to investigators. The doctor also may testify in court if needed to secure legal protection for the child or criminal prosecution of the person suspected of perpetrating the abuse or neglect.

If your child has been abused, you may be the only person who can help them. There is no good reason to delay reporting your suspicions of abuse. Denying the problem will only make the situation worse. It allows the abuse or neglect to continue unchecked and lowers your child's chance for optimal physical and mental health and well-being.

In any case of abuse or neglect, the child's safety is of primary concern. They need to be in a safe environment, free of the potential for more abuse and neglect.

Preventing abuse and neglect

The major reasons for physical and psychological maltreatment of children within the family often are a parent's feelings of isolation, stress, and frustration. Parents need [support](#) and as much information as possible in order to raise their children responsibly. They need to be taught how to cope with their own feelings of frustration and anger without venting them on children. They also need the companionship of other adults who will listen and help during times of crisis.

Support groups through local community organizations often are helpful first steps to ease some of the isolation or frustration parents may be feeling. Parents who were themselves abused as children are in particular need of support. Confronting, addressing, and healing parental mental and emotional health takes a lot of courage and insight. But this is often the best way to lower the odds of past abuse being passed on to the next generation of children

Personal supervision of and involvement in your [child's activities](#) are the best ways to prevent physical and sexual abuse outside the home. Pay careful attention to your child's reports about and reactions to his experiences at child care and school. Always investigate if your child tells you they've been maltreated or if they have a sudden unexplained change in behavior.

Although you don't want to frighten your child, you can teach some basic rules of safety in a non-threatening manner. Teach them to keep their distance from strangers, not to wander away from you in unfamiliar territory, to say "no" when someone asks them to do something they don't want to do. Tell them to always tell you if someone hurts them or makes them feel bad, even if that person is someone they know.

Remember

Open, two-way communication with your child provides the best chance of knowing early when there is a problem. Make sure your child understands they will not get in trouble if they tell you about abuse or other confusing events.

Instead of teaching them that they are surrounded by danger, teach them that they are strong, capable, and can count on you to keep them safe.

IN MONROE COUNTY:

An adult who suspects child abuse or neglect can call the statewide toll free hotline at 1-800-342-3720. If you are deaf or hard of hearing please call TDD/TTY at 1-800-638-5163 or have your Video Relay System provider call 1-800-342-3720. If you feel that there is an immediate threat call 911 or the local police.

More information

- [Sexual Abuse](#)
- [Preventing Abuse in Youth Sports and Organized Activities](#)

- [What is a Child Abuse Pediatrician?](#)
- [Stress and Violence at Home During the Pandemic](#)
- [Shaken Baby Syndrome: Protect Your Infant From Abusive Head Trauma](#)
- [Tips for Coping With a New Baby During COVID-19](#)
- [How to Cope With the Challenges of Being a New Parent](#)
- [Helping to Prevent Maltreatment of Children with Disabilities](#)
- [Parenting After Trauma: Understanding Your Child's Needs](#)

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The information contained on this Web site should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. There may be variations in treatment that your pediatrician may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances.

**THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION IS FROM THE
MONROE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES,
CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES:
<https://www.monroecounty.gov/hs-child>**

Child Protective Services is a program area of the Children and Family Services Division of the Monroe County Department of Human Services that:

1. Receives and investigates reports of suspected abuse and neglect of children;
2. Protects children who have been abused or neglected; and
3. Provides support and rehabilitative services to families where children have been abused or neglected.

Child Protective Services is organized into three sections:

1. **Child Protective Services Intake/After Hours**
Provides 24 hour services to the Monroe County community to investigate reports of suspected child abuse or neglect.
2. **Child Protective Services Investigation**
Investigates reports of suspected child abuse or neglect and provides immediate services to families to resolve short-term child abuse or neglect problems.
3. **Child Protective Services Management**
Provides respectful, strength-based, and culturally competent case management and supportive services to children and their families. Safety, permanency, and well-being are the main focus of these teams, who work to support the right of each child to a lasting, safe, and nurturing environment where he or she can develop secure attachments and a sense of belonging. Some of these families have children in foster care, some have children court-placed with relatives, and others have children at home under MCDHS supervision.

At times, Child and Family Services must remove a child(ren) from their home due to immediate and/or impending danger from their legal guardian. Whenever possible, efforts are made to work with the legal guardians and parent(s) to identify known relative or non-relative caretakers to provide safe care for the child(ren) until the safety issues can be resolved. NYS requires District and voluntary authorized agency child welfare workers who notify relatives and non-relative Kinship caregivers, and prospective suitable persons of a child's removal due to maltreatment and must provide in accordance with 18-OCFS-ADM-23. 18-OCFS-ADM-23 mandates that the following informational materials be provided at such time:

- [Know Your Options: Kin Caring for Children \(Pub. 5175\)](#)
- [Make an Informed Choice: Kin Caring for Children \(Pub. 5120\)](#)

If a relative or non-relative chooses to provide care to a child removed from the home by Child Welfare, that family is additionally eligible for supportive services to assist them in continuing to provide ongoing care. Services that accompany a child welfare placement with a relative or non-relative caretaker may include case management services, daycare support for working caretakers, and referral and connection to community services for counseling, health care, or other services.

What to do if you think a child is being abused or neglected.

Please call the New York State Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-342-3720. You can call anytime of the day or night. When you call, a Child Protective Services intake specialist will ask you for information about the child's family and about how and why you think the child is being mistreated. If the situation you describe meets the legal standards that are required for Child Protective Services to take action, a report of your suspicions will be registered and assigned to a Monroe County Child Protective Services Unit for investigation or assessment.

Visit the link below for questions about preventing and reporting child abuse.

[Do Right By Kids - Child Abuse Reporting](#)

What happens when a child abuse or neglect report is registered?

All situations that are recorded in the New York State Child Abuse and Maltreatment Register must be investigated by caseworkers from Child Protective Services. The investigation must begin within 24 hours of the time the child abuse or neglect report was recorded and must include the following steps:

- An immediate assessment of the safety of the children in the household;
- A visit to the home to assess the living conditions and interaction between the family members;
- Personal observations and interviews with all members of the household;
- Contact with the person who made the child abuse or neglect report to gather more information;
- Contact with other people who are in a position to provide relevant information about the family's situation;
- A decision about whether evidence of child abuse or neglect exists;
- Development of a plan to protect the abused or neglected children and reduce the risk of further child abuse or neglect.

Is there confidentiality for reporters of abuse or neglect?

Generally, Child Protective caseworkers are prohibited by law from identifying people who make child abuse or neglect reports. In rare instances, a Child Protective caseworker may tell a family who made a report. This could occur when:

- The person who made the report gives written permission to tell the family;
- A judge orders that the identity of the person who made the report be provided in a court hearing
- If an Article 10 Abuse/Neglect petition is filed, the source is named in the petition.

Definitions of Child Abuse, Child Neglect, Serious Physical Injury, and Sex Offense

What is child abuse?

Child abuse occurs when a parent or another person with legal responsibility for the care of a child:

- Causes a serious physical injury to the child or allows someone else to cause a serious physical injury to the child;
- Creates a substantial risk of a serious physical injury to the child or allows someone else to create a substantial risk of a serious physical injury to the child; or
- Commits a sex offense against the child or allows someone else to commit a sex offense against the child.

What is child neglect?

Child neglect occurs when a parent or another person with legal responsibility for the care of a child causes physical, mental, or emotional harm to the child (or creates an imminent danger of such harm) by:

- Failing to supply the child with adequate food, clothing, shelter, education, medical or surgical care; or
- Failing to provide the child with proper supervision or guardianship; or
- The excessive use of physical punishment; or
- Using drugs; or
- Using alcoholic beverages to the extent that he/she loses control of his/her actions; or
- Other acts of a serious nature.

What is a serious physical injury?

A serious physical injury is one that causes:

- Death;
- Serious or protracted disfigurement;
- Protracted impairment of physical or emotional health;
- Protracted loss or impairment of the use of any part of the child's body.

What is a sex offense?

A sex offense against a child is any sexual contact that involves a child and parent (or other adult responsible for the child's care) and is done for the sexual gratification of either the child or the adult.

Sex offenses against children also include:

- Allowing, permitting, or encouraging a child to engage in prostitution;
- Committing incest with a child;
- Using a child in a sexual performance