

WHAT EVERY ADULT SHOULD KNOW ABOUT CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

**David Lowenstein, Ph.D.
Psychologist**

- 1 out of 5 children will be sexually abused before they reach 18
- 90% of abuse is committed by someone the child knows
- 25% of the abuse occurs when the perpetrator is someone in the family
- Reseat indicates that it continues today because of the silence that has allowed it to continue

What Exactly is Child Sexual Abuse?

- Experts define sexual abuse as sexual activity with a child by an adult, an adolescent or an older child
- When an adult engages in any sexual activity with a child he/she is committing sexual abuse which is a crime in all states
- Touching behaviors between adults and child considered sexual abuse include:
 1. Touching a child's genitals
 2. Making a child touch someone else's genitals
 3. Playing sexual (pants-down) games
 4. Genital, oral and/or anal penetration
- Non-touching behaviors between adults and children considered sexual abuse are:
 1. Showing pornography to a child
 2. Exposing oneself to a child
 3. Photographing a child in sexual poses
 4. Encouraging a child to watch or hear sexual acts
 5. Voyeurism (peeping Tom)
 6. Verbal or emotional abuse of a sexual nature

What Are Some Warning Signs of Sexually Abusive Behaviors?

- The following questions will assist you notice some behaviors that you should question

- Do you know someone who:

1. Refuses to let a child set any of his or her own limits?
2. Insists on hugging, touching, kissing or holding a child even when the child does not want this affection?
3. Is overly interested in the sexuality of a particular child or teen, such as talking repeatedly about his/her developing body or interfering with dating?
4. Manages to get time alone with a child with no interruptions?
5. Has too much interest in children or activities with children or teens without much interest in adult activities?
6. Is an older child who spends most of his/her time with younger children?

- If you answered “yes” to some of these questions, talk to that person
- You are not accusing them, but simply asking them to stop what they are doing as it is uncomfortable

- Do you know someone who:
 1. Shows pornography to children?
 2. Except for clear health reasons, touches a child’s genitals or gives enemas to a child?
 3. Performs sexual acts in front of children?
 4. Photographs children in sexual poses?
 5. Performs sexual acts with children?
 - If you answered “yes” to any of these questions, it is ABUSE
 - Contact FCCS, police department and report this immediately

What Signs and Symptoms of Sexual Abuse Can We Look For In Children?

- If you are concerned that a child may have been abused, here are some things you can look for in a possible victim

- Please keep in mind, though, that some of these behavioral signs can show up at other stressful times in a child's life, such as divorce, death or problems at school
- Do you notice any of the following behaviors?
 1. Nightmares, trouble sleeping, fear of the dark, or other sleeping problems
 2. Extreme fear of monsters
 3. Spacing out at odd times
 4. Loss of appetite, trouble eating or swallowing
 5. Sudden mood swings, rage, fear, anger or withdrawal
 6. Fear of certain people or places, for example, a child may not want to be left alone with a baby-sitter, a friend, a relative, or some other child or adult; or a child who is usually talkative and cheery may become quiet and distant when around a certain person
 7. Stomach illnesses all of the time, with no identifiable reason
 8. An older child behaving like a younger child, like bed-wetting
 9. Sexual activities with toys or other children, such as simulating sex with dolls or asking other children to behave sexually
 10. New words for private body parts
 11. Acting uncomfortable about a "secret" he/she has with an adult or older child; the child may be evasive about the secret or may refuse to talk about it
 12. Making drawings that are scary or use a lot of black and red
 13. Talking about a new friend
 14. Suddenly having money
 15. Cutting or burning herself or himself as an adolescent
- Any of these symptoms does not necessarily indicate that a child has been sexually abused
- If you see any of these it is important to further investigate

Physically Symptoms:

- Do you notice any of the following physical signs in a child:
 1. Unexplained bruises, redness, or bleeding of the child's genitals, anus or mouth
 2. Pain at the genitals, anus or mouth
 3. Genital sores or milky fluids in the genital area

- If you answered “yes” to any of these questions, bring your child to the family doctor immediately