

Protecting your child from sexual abuse



What is child sexual abuse?

Child sexual abuse is any sexual contact between an adult and a child or sexual contact between 2 children when one exerts power over the other.

Sexual contact could be:

- Touching and/or putting body parts or objects inside a child's genitals (private parts) or mouth.
- Making a child touch their own or someone else's private parts.
- Showing a child someone's private parts or sexual pictures.
- Watching and/or taking pictures of a child for sexual pleasure

Child sexual abuse is a crime. It can happen only one time, or it can happen repeatedly. Either way, it places a child at great risk for physical and emotional harm.

How common is child sexual abuse?

Child sexual abuse is more common than most people think. About one in 10 children has been sexually abused. You may know a child who has been or is being sexually abused.

Who sexually abuses children?

Ninety percent (90%) of abusers are people the child knows and trusts. An abuser can be:

- A family member – a father, mother, stepparent, grandparent, aunt, uncle, cousin, brother or sister
- Someone outside of your family – a coach, teacher, religious leader, classmate, babysitter or neighbor

Many abusers have more than one victim. Abusers are not usually the scary looking stranger. You cannot tell who is an abuser by looking at them.

What can I do to help protect my child from sexual abuse?

Children need adults to keep them safe. You can do many things to help prevent sexual abuse.

- Know the adults who spend time with your child. Ask childcare workers and others who look after your child how adults are supervised when alone with children. When possible, avoid isolated one-on-one situations.
- Make sure adults who spend time with your child know the signs of child sexual abuse and how to react if they suspect or find out abuse is taking place.
- Make surprise visits to your child's care center, classroom, sports practice or church group. Watch for odd behaviors or anything that does not feel right to you.

In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.

Protecting your child from sexual abuse, continued

- Reduce the times that your child is alone with an adult. When your child is alone with an adult, talk with the adult and your child apart about how their time together went.
- Listen to your child. Take your child’s concerns seriously.
- Talk with other adults about child sexual abuse. Share your knowledge and concerns with other parents, family members, teachers, religious leaders and others.

What should I teach my child about sexual abuse?

Some ideas for teaching your child about sexual abuse include:

Teach your child the correct names for all body parts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Start when they are a baby. Teach your son that he has a penis. Teach your daughter that she has a vagina.• Answer your child’s questions about sex with simple, honest answers.
Talk with your child about healthy relationships and sexual development throughout childhood.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Talk with your child about healthy sexual development and puberty before signs of it begin.• Use everyday opportunities as they come up to talk with your child.
Teach your child that their body belongs to them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Let your child know that they can say “no” to any unwanted touching.• Support your child’s limits, even when they do not want hugs, kisses or even tickles from family members.
Talk with your child about sexual abuse.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Let your child know that they should tell you or another trusted adult if anyone touches their private parts.• Let your child know that surprises are OK, but they should never keep secrets.
Talk openly with your child often.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ask if anything has made your child feel uncomfortable.• Make sure your child knows they should talk with you about anything that makes them sad, scared or confused.

What else can parents do?

- Learn what sexual behavior is normal for children. For example, most young children want to know the differences between boys and girls. Ask your child’s doctor for more details on child sexual development.

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Protecting your child from sexual abuse, continued

- Teach your child to respect others and to not touch others in ways that make them feel uncomfortable. Set and respect each family member’s boundaries with dressing, bathing and other personal activities.
- Keep an eye on your child’s internet, email, text, cell phone and tablet use. Keep the computer in a common area like the family room. Have privacy settings turned on, and set limits on use.

What if I suspect abuse?

You may notice behavior changes or physical signs that concern you. If you think any child is being abused, take action.

Contact the police or the Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS):

- If a child is in immediate danger, contact the police by calling 911.
- In all other cases, call DFCS at 1-855-GA-CHILD or 1-855-422-4453.

Call a helpline for support and more details:

Helpline	Phone number
Prevent Child Abuse Georgia Helpline	1-800-CHILDREN or 1-800-244-3736
Darkness to Light National Helpline	1-866-FOR-LIGHT or 1-866-367-5444
Stop It Now! Helpline	1-888-PREVENT or 1-888-773-8368

Ask your child’s doctor to refer you to a child advocacy center. Child advocacy centers provide specialized services to children who may have been abused.

Center	Phone number
Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta Stephanie V. Blank Center for Safe and Healthy Children at Scottish Rite	404-785-3820
Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta Stephanie V. Blank Center for Safe and Healthy Children at Hughes Spalding	404-785-9930
Children’s Advocacy Centers of Georgia (statewide listing)	770-319-6888 (or visit www.cacga.org)

This teaching sheet contains general information only. Talk with your child’s doctor or a member of your child’s healthcare team about specific care of your child.

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