
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.

Boys and girls are abused most often by adults or older children who know them and who have power over them. The abuser is often a person whom the child trusts.

Sexual abuse can happen only one time, or it can happen often. Either way, it places children and teens at great risk for physical and emotional harm.

What are the possible signs of sexual abuse?

Physical signs may or may not occur but could include:

- Irritation, discharge or bleeding of the private parts or anal area
- Bruising of the private parts or anal area
- Pain with urination (going to the bathroom)

Children may also show emotional signs such as problems with:

- Behavior changes at school, home or with friends
- Sexual behavior that is too detailed for the child's age
- Sudden, unexplained fear of a certain person, place or thing
- Self-destructive behavior or suicide attempts

What medical tests could my child have?

Your child's doctor may send you to the emergency department (ED) or refer you to a child advocacy center for a forensic medical exam.

- This involves a head-to-toe exam by a health care provider, including an exam of your child's private parts.
- They may also do blood tests to check for sexually transmitted infections (STIs).
- Any tests will be discussed with you before or after the exam.

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

Child sexual abuse, continued

When do I get the results?

If any of the test results are positive, your child's doctor or other Children's health care provider will contact you.

What is the treatment?

Your child's doctor will talk with you about specific care for your child.

- Be sure to give your child any prescribed medicines, and follow all treatment directions.
- Contact the Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) at 1-800-GA-CHILD and law enforcement (police) if you have not already done so.

How can I help my child?

If your child tells you that they have been sexually abused:

- Stay as calm as possible – your child will take cues from you and your behavior.
- Adults often do not believe children who report sexual abuse. Take what your child says seriously.
- Assure your child that the events were not their fault.
- Listen to your child, but do not ask a lot of questions. Let your child talk in their own words when your child is ready.
- Keep all appointments for medical exams, interviews and counseling.
- Protect your child's privacy. Tell only people who need to know.

When should I call the doctor?

Call your child's doctor if your child tells you that they have been sexually abused. Also call your child's doctor if you see or if your child complains about:

- Pain with urination
- Unexplained genital sores or lesions
- Unexplained genital bleeding or discharge

How do I schedule follow-up at the Stephanie V. Blank Center for Safe and Healthy Children?

The Stephanie V. Blank Center for Safe and Healthy Children provides specialized services to your family after an allegation of child abuse. If you are referred there, you may be contacted to schedule an appointment, or you can call the intake line at 404-785-3833 (Scottish Rite) or 404-785-9930 (Hughes Spalding).

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.

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