

#### 4. EMOTIONAL ABUSE

(Aka: verbal abuse, mental abuse, and psychological maltreatment)

Emotional child abuse is any attitude, behavior, or failure to act that interferes with a child's mental health or social development. A repeated pattern of caregiver behavior or

extreme incident(s) that convey to children that they are worthless, flawed, unloved, unwanted, endangered, or only of value in meeting another's needs.

It can range from a simple verbal insult to an extreme form of punishment. Emotional abuse is almost always present when another form of abuse is found. Emotional abuse can have more long-lasting negative psychiatric effects than either physical abuse or sexual abuse.



Emotional abuse is illustrated by:

- ▶ Belittling, rejecting, ridiculing, blaming, scape-goating, bullying.
- ▶ Terrorizing, threatening violence or fearful conditions.
- ▶ Isolating, confinement, restricting the child from social interactions, etc.
- ▶ Exploiting or corrupting.
- ▶ Denying the child an emotional response.
- ▶ Deliberately not talking to a child for an extended amount of time.

Indications:

- ▶ Shows extremes in behavior - overly compliant or demanding behavior, extreme passivity, or aggression.
- ▶ Is either inappropriately adult (e.g. parenting other children, their own parent, care-giver or siblings) or inappropriately infantile (e.g. frequently rocking or head-banging).
- ▶ Is delayed in physical or emotional development.
- ▶ Has attempted suicide.
- ▶ Reports a lack of attachment to the parent.

Child abuse crosses all racial, economic and cultural lines. Sometimes families who seem to have it all from the outside are hiding a different story behind closed doors.

If you suspect that a child is being abused call the police or child welfare agency.

#### Sources:

National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information. Administration for Children and Families. National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect. National Institutes of Health & the National Library of Medicine. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.



MORE INFORMATION  
ABOUT CHILD ABUSE  
AND PREVENTION HERE



United States/South America/Canada  
[www.abusewatch.net](http://www.abusewatch.net)

Ireland/UK/Europe  
[www.abusewatch.eu](http://www.abusewatch.eu)

Africa, Australia and New Zealand  
[www.abusewatch.info](http://www.abusewatch.info)

**'Child abuse casts a shadow  
the length of a lifetime.'**

- Herbert Ward

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THE FOUR TYPES  
OF CHILD ABUSE

# CHILD ABUSE. WHAT IS IT?

Child abuse and neglect is any recent act or failure to act on the part of a parent or caretaker, which results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse or exploitation of a child. It is an act or failure to act which presents an imminent risk of serious harm to a child.

(U.S. Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act)

These types of abuse are more typically found in combination than alone. A physically abused child, for example, is often emotionally abused, and a sexually abused child also may be neglected.

## Introduction

The following descriptions will give you an idea of what each type of abuse includes. More in-depth information is available on our websites. (See center back panel)



## Who does it happen to?

A child of any age, sex, race, religion, and socioeconomic background can fall victim to child abuse and neglect.

## The Four Types of abuse:

### 1. Physical Abuse

**2. Sexual child Abuse** (Rape, molestation, child pornography production and possession)

**3. Neglect** (Physical neglect, educational neglect, and emotional neglect)

**4. Emotional Abuse** (Aka: Verbal, Mental, or Psychological abuse)

## 1. PHYSICAL ABUSE

Physical child abuse is the non-accidental infliction of physical injury to a child.

Characterized by injury, such as bruises, lesions and fractures that result from hitting (hand, stick, strap, or other object), punching, shaking, kicking, beating, choking, burning (with open flame or hot objects – boiling water, cigarettes), throwing, stabbing or otherwise harming a child.

The parent or caretaker need not have intended to hurt the child for it to constitute physical abuse.

Other specific types of physical child abuse include:

▶ **Shaken Baby Syndrome (SBS)** is the collection of signs and symptoms resulting from the violent shaking of a baby that can cause tearing of the brain lining (dura), bleeds, permanent brain injury, or death.

▶ **Munchausen by Proxy Syndrome** Inducing medical illness in a child or wrongly convincing others that a child is sick. It reflects a profoundly dysfunctional relationship between parent and child. The most current literature and scientific thinking on this is that it is a manifestation of an extreme form of attachment disorder.

## ▶ Alcohol, cigarette or drug use during pregnancy.

Alcohol use can lead to Fetal Alcohol Syndrome. Cigarette use can pre-condition a child to cancer. Drug and alcohol use can cause the baby life-long retardation and injury.

Physical abuse indicators include when the child:

- ▶ Reports injury by a parent or another adult caregiver.
- ▶ Has unexplained burns, bites, bruises, broken bones, black eyes, or welts in the shape of an object (wire hanger, stick, belt, etc).
- ▶ Has fading bruises or other noticeable marks.
- ▶ Seems frightened of the parents and protests or cries when it is time to go home.
- ▶ Flinches or cowers at the approach of adults.

Consider the possibility of physical abuse when the parent or other adult caregiver:

- ▶ Offers conflicting, unconvincing, or no explanation for the child's injury.
- ▶ Describes the child as 'evil,' or other negative way.
- ▶ Uses harsh physical discipline with the child.

## 2. SEXUAL ABUSE

Any sexual behavior with - or sexual exploitation of - a child.

There are three types of sexual offenses against children: Rape, molestation, distribution or production or possession of child pornography.

Any vaginal or anal intercourse with a child is rape. A child cannot legally give consent to sexual activity. Sexual abuse is never a child's fault.

Child sexual abuse includes a wide range of behaviors, including:

- ▶ Rape: vaginal or anal penile penetration.
- ▶ Oral sex by or to any adult.
- ▶ Genital contact with no intrusion.
- ▶ Fondling of a child's breasts or buttocks.
- ▶ Indecent exposure.
- ▶ Production, distribution or possession of child pornography.
- ▶ Sexual Exploitation: Use of a child in prostitution, pornography.

Most sexual abuse (90%) is incest perpetrated by a family member or someone the child knows, including those in biological families, adoptive families, and stepfamilies. Strangers account for 10% of sexual abuse. Incest most often occurs within a father-daughter relationship; however, mother-son, father-son, and sibling-sibling incest also occurs.

Sexual child abusers can be: fathers, mothers, siblings, relatives, friends, childcare professionals, babysitters, teachers, clergy, athletic coaches, foster-parents, neighbors, and strangers.



Some signs of sexual child abuse:

- ▶ Inappropriate interest in or knowledge of sexual acts.
- ▶ Seductive behavior by a child.
- ▶ Avoidance of things related to sexuality, or rejection of own genitals or body.
- ▶ Over-compliance or excessive aggression.
- ▶ Fear of a particular person or family member.
- ▶ Uninhibited behavior.

Sexual abuse may have occurred when the child:

- ▶ Reports sexual abuse by a parent or another adult caregiver.
- ▶ Has difficulty walking or sitting.
- ▶ Changes in behavior, including discipline problems, fecal soiling, bed wetting, insomnia, nightmares, depression, changes in appetite.
- ▶ Suddenly refuses to change for gym or to participate in physical activities.
- ▶ Demonstrates bizarre, sophisticated, or unusual sexual knowledge or behavior.
- ▶ Becomes pregnant or contracts a venereal disease, particularly if under age 14.
- ▶ Runs away.

## 3. NEGLECT

Neglect is a pattern of failing to provide for a child's basic needs. It is **abuse through omission**; of not doing something resulting in significant harm or risk of significant harm.

There are four types of neglect: physical neglect, medical neglect, educational neglect and emotional neglect.

**1. Physical Neglect:** Failure to provide food, weather appropriate clothing, supervision, a safe and clean home.

**2. Medical Neglect:** Failure to provide the necessary medical or dental care for a child's condition.

**3. Educational Neglect:** Failure to enroll a school-age child in school or to provide necessary special education. Allowing excessive absences from school.

**4. Emotional Neglect:** Failure to provide emotional support, love, and affection to a child. Exposure of a child to spousal, pet, or drug and alcohol abuse.



Consider the possibility of neglect when the child:

- ▶ Is frequently absent from school.
- ▶ Is excessively hungry.
- ▶ Begs or steals food or money.
- ▶ Lacks needed medical or dental care, immunizations, or glasses.
- ▶ Is consistently dirty.
- ▶ Has severe body odor.
- ▶ Lacks sufficient weather appropriate clothing.
- ▶ Abuses alcohol or other drugs.
- ▶ Apparent lack of supervision at home.

**Failure to thrive** is a condition in which children fail physically to develop to their normal full genetic potential. It may be caused by medical (organic) circumstances or parental neglect (inorganic) that prevent the child from growing as expected. The cause can be determined by monitoring a child in a hospital setting to see if they put on weight through a regular feeding schedule.