



CHILDREN'S  
AID SOCIETY  
of TORONTO

*Because children depend on all of us*

# fact sheet



## Types of Abuse and Indicators

### Physical Abuse

The signs and indicators of abuse and neglect may include but are not limited to those that follow.

It is important to realize that the presence of any one indicator is not conclusive proof that a child has been abused. In most instances, abused children will exhibit a number of behavioural and physical indicators.

Physical abuse is any harm to a child caused by an action or omission of action by the child's caregiver. Injuries may include:

- bruises
- welts
- cuts
- fractures
- burns
- internal injuries

Physical abuse can be one or two isolated incidents or can occur over a prolonged period of time.

#### Behavioural indicators:

- cannot recall how injuries occurred or offers an inconsistent explanation
- wary of adults
- may cringe or flinch if touched unexpectedly
- infants may display a vacant stare
- extremely aggressive or extremely withdrawn
- indiscriminately seeks affection
- extremely compliant and/or eager to please

#### Physical indicators:

- injuries that are not consistent with explanation
- presence of several injuries that are in various stages of healing

- presence of various injuries over a period of time
- facial injuries in infants and preschool children
- injuries inconsistent with the child's age and developmental phase

### Sexual Abuse

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Sexual abuse is any sexual exploitation of a child by an older person where the child is being used for a sexual purpose. The Criminal Code of Canada identifies a number of types of sexual abuse, including:

- sexual interference
- an invitation to sexually touch
- sexual exploitation of a young person
- parent or guardian procuring sexual activity from a child
- householder permitting sexual activity
- exposing genitals to a child; and incest.

#### Behavioural indicators:

- age inappropriate play with toys, self or others displaying explicit sexual acts
- age inappropriate sexually explicit drawing and/or descriptions
- bizarre, sophisticated or unusual

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## Types of Abuse and Indicators (cont'd)

- sexual knowledge
- prostitution
- seductive behaviours

### Physical indicators:

- unusual or excessive itching in the genital or anal area
- torn, stained or bloody underwear (may be observed if the child needs bathroom assistance)
- pregnancy
- injuries to the genital or anal areas, e.g. bruising, swelling or infection
- venereal disease

### Emotional Abuse

The signs and indicators of abuse and neglect may include but are not limited to those that follow.

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Emotional abuse includes all acts of omission or commission which result in the absence of a nurturing environment for the child. It occurs when the caregiver continually treats the child in such a negative way that the child's concept of "self" is seriously impaired. Emotionally abusive behaviour by the caregiver can include constant yelling; demeaning remarks; rejecting, ignoring or isolating the child; or terrorizing the child. Emotional abuse can be the most difficult to identify and prove.

### Behavioural Indicators:

- severe depression
- extreme withdrawal or aggressiveness

- overly compliant, too well mannered, too neat or clean
- extreme attention seeking
- displays extreme inhibition in play

### Physical indicators:

- bed wetting that is non-medical in origin
- frequent psychosomatic complaints, headaches, nausea, abdominal pains
- child fails to thrive

### Neglect

The signs and indicators of abuse and neglect may include but are not limited to those that follow.

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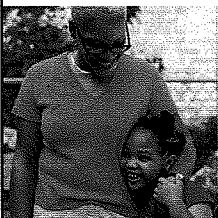
Most caregivers do not intend to neglect their children. It usually results from ignorance about appropriate care for children or an ability to plan ahead. Neglect occurs when a caregiver fails to provide basic needs such as adequate food, sleep, safety, supervision, clothing or medical treatment.

### Behavioural indicators:

- pale, listless, unkempt
- frequent absence from school
- inappropriate clothing for the weather, dirty clothes
- engaged in delinquent acts, alcohol/drug abuse
- frequently forgets a lunch

### Physical indicators:

- poor hygiene
- unattended physical problems or medical needs, eg dental work, glasses
- consistent lack of supervision



For more information please call The Children's Aid Society of Toronto at **416-924-4646** or [inquiries@TorontoCAS.ca](mailto:inquiries@TorontoCAS.ca)

**[www.TorontoCAS.ca](http://www.TorontoCAS.ca)**