

# Child Maltreatment – Signs and Symptoms

## Physical Abuse

- *Physical Indicators*
  - *Unexplained bruises and welts (often found on face, torso, buttocks, back or thighs)*
  - *Unexplained fractures; dislocations and skeletal injuries often involve facial structure, skull and bones around joints; may include multiple or spiral fractures, shaken baby*
  - *Unexplained burns often on the palms, soles, buttocks and back*
- *Other unexplained injuries: lacerations, abrasions, human bit marks or pinch marks, loss of hair/bald patches, retinal hemorrhage, abdominal injuries*
- *Behavioral Indicators*
  - *Request or feel deserving of punishment*
  - *Be afraid to go home and/or request to stay in school or daycare, etc.*
  - *Be overly shy, tends to avoid physical contacts with adults, especially parents*
  - *Display behavioral extremes (withdrawal or aggressiveness)*
- *Indicators in Parent/Caretaker*
  - *Perceive the child as being bad or difficult*
  - *Instruct teachers or caregivers to use harsh punishment for misbehavior*
  - *Have been physically abused as a child*
  - *Demand an unrealistic level of performance from the child for his/her age and/or ability*
  - *Use extreme forms of physical punishment*
- *Effects of Physical Abuse*
  - *Low trust of others or the world*
  - *Extremely vigilant*
  - *Learning problems*

- *Psychiatric symptoms*
- *Delinquent or other oppositional behavior*
- *Lying and stealing*
- *Constant attention seeking behavior*
- *Low self-esteem*
- *Fears seems magnified given the situation; extremely fearful*
- *Verbally abusive toward other children*
- *Physically aggressive toward other children*
- *Physically aggressive toward other children*
- *Excessive temper tantrums*
- *Suicidal or other self-destructive behavior*
- *Very protective of abusing parent*
- *Exhibit guilt and take responsibility for abuse*

---

### *Neglect*

---

- *Physical Indicators*
  - *Height and weight significantly below age level*
  - *Inappropriate clothing for weather*
  - *Poor hygiene, including lice, body odor*
  - *Child abandoned or left with inadequate or inappropriate supervision*
  - *Untreated illness or injury*
  - *Lack of safe, warm, sanitary shelter*
  - *Lack of necessary dental, and medical care*
- *Behavioral Indicators*
  - *Begging for or stealing food*
  - *Falling asleep in school*
  - *Poor school attendance, frequent tardiness*
  - *Dull apathetic appearance*
  - *Reports no caregiver in the home*
  - *Assumes adult responsibilities*
  - *Chronic hunger*

- *Indicators in Parent/Caregiver*
  - *Show no concern for the child*
  - *Express inappropriate expectations of child*
  - *Refuses to seek medical attention needed by child*
  - *Be unaware of the child's needs*
  - *Leave very young children unattended*
  - *Fall to maintain proper hygiene of child*
  
- *Effects in Neglected Children*
  - *Unresponsive to others*
  - *Developmental delays*
  - *Indiscriminately seeks affection*
  - *Unattended physical problems*
  - *Delay in speech*
  - *Unruly, unfocused, wandering behavior*

---

### *Sexual Abuse*

---

- *Behavioral Indicators*
  - *Sexualized behavior in young children; promiscuity and prostitution in adolescents*
  - *Sexual knowledge and/or behavior that is beyond what is expected for the child's age*
  - *Depression, suicidal gestures, obsessions, chronic runaway*
  - *Frequent psychosomatic complaints, such as headaches, backaches, stomach aches*
  - *Antisocial behavior such as running away, drug or alcohol abuse, delinquency*
  - *Sudden avoidance of certain familiar adults or places; sudden development of phobias*
  - *Avoidance of undressing, wearing extra layers of clothing*
  - *Decline in school performance*
  - *Pregnancy in young adolescents*
  - *Sexual victimization of other children*

- *Physical Indicators*
  - *Complaints of illness which cannot be explained medically, including pain and irritation of the genitals*
  - *Genital bleeding, pain, odor; problems sitting or walking*
  - *Frequent yeast or urinary infections*
  - *Sexually transmitted disease*
  
- *Indicators in Parent/Caregiver*
  - *Have been sexually abused as a child*
  - *Isolate the child or prohibit the child's contact with other children*
  - *Be secretive and/or isolated*
  
- *Effects in Sexually Abused Children*
  - *Pseudo maturity*
  - *Interaction problems with adults*
  - *Fearfulness and anxiety*
  - *Self-blame*
  - *Flat affect*
  - *Peer interaction problems-conflict; loner*
  - *Monocommunicative*
  - *Suicidal ideation*
  - *Overly dependent, shy or aggressive*
  - *Learning difficulties*
  - *Inability to concentrate*
  - *Sudden change in school performance*
  - *Sleep disturbances*
  - *Emotional vulnerability*

---

## **Emotional Abuse/Neglect**

---

- **Physical Indicators**
  - *Eating disorders*
  - *Sleep disturbances, nightmares*
  - *Wetting/soiling by school-age child*
  - *Speech disorders, stuttering*
  - *Failure to thrive*
  - *Developmental lags*
  
- **Behavioral Indicators**
  - *Habit disorders such as biting, kicking, head banging, thumb sucking in an older child*
  - *Poor peer relationships*
  - *Behavioral extremes, overly compliant, demanding withdrawn, aggressive, destructive*
  - *Complaints of illness which cannot be explained medically*
  - *Self-destructive behavior, oblivious to hazards and risks*
  - *Chronic academic under achievement*
  
- **Indicators in Parent/Caregiver**
  - *Withhold love and affection*
  - *Use words that hurt the child*
  - *Reject the child*
  - *Look to the child to meet their physical and emotional needs*
  - *Show very little concerns for the child*
  
- **Effects among Younger Children**
  - *Delayed physically, emotionally and/or intellectually*
  - *Overly complaint, passive or undemanding*
  - *Inappropriately adult in their behaviors*
  - *Inappropriately childish*

○ *Indicators Unique to adolescents*

- *Developmental lags*
- *Often appear extremely withdrawn*
- *May be aggressive and exhibit antisocial behavior*
- *Often display psychosocial and cultural deficiencies while at the same time appearing emotionally well-adjusted*

