

Child Abuse: Definitions, Signs and Symptoms

Types of abuse	What does it mean?	Signs and symptoms that children are experiencing this type of abuse
Physical Abuse	Includes hitting, kicking, punching and other ways of inflicting pain or injury such as poisoning (perhaps with harmful drugs or alcohol), drowning or smothering. (NSPCC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unexplained recurrent injuries, burns, bites, bruises, broken bones, or black eyes • Seems scared or suspicious of adults • Improbable excuses or refusal to explain injuries • Aggression towards others • Is always watchful and "on alert," as if waiting for something bad to happen • Shies away from touch, flinches at sudden movements • Fear of medical help or examination • Chronic running away • Abuses alcohol or other substances • Bald patches
Emotional Abuse	Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill-treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development . It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. It may involve causing children to frequently feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill treatment of a child, though it may occur alone. Department of Health et al, 1999 (p.5-6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overreaction to mistakes • Sudden speech disorders • Extreme fear of any new situations • Physical, mental and emotional development lags • Shows extremes in behavior (extremely passive, aggressive, compliant or demanding) • Acts either inappropriately adult (taking care of other children) or infantile (rocking, thumb-sucking, bedwetting) • Continual self-depreciation ('I'm stupid, ugly, worthless, etc') • Inappropriate response to pain ('I deserve this')
Neglect	This is the persistent failure to meet the child's basic physical and / or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's physical or cognitive development. For example, inadequate care and supervision which leaves a child in a dangerous situation where they could be harmed (but only where this can be avoided). DCSF- March 2010 (38-40)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequently absent from school • Constant Hunger • No social relationships • Lacks sufficient clothing for the weather • Destructive tendencies • Constant tiredness • Emaciation • Untreated medical problems • Poor personal hygiene
Sexual Abuse	Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities including prostitution, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative (e.g. rape, buggery or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities , such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways" DfES, 2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extreme reactions, such as depression, self-mutilation, suicide attempts, anorexia • Being isolated or withdrawn • Become worried about clothing being removed • Being overly affectionate or knowledgeable in a sexual way inappropriate to the child's age. • Trying to be ultra good or perfect; overreacting to criticism • Trouble walking or sitting • Makes strong efforts to avoid a specific person, without an obvious reason • Personality changes such as becoming insecure or clingy • Sudden loss of appetite or compulsive eating