



Home → Health Topics → Child Abuse

URL of this page: <https://medlineplus.gov/childabuse.html>

## Child Abuse

Child abuse is doing something or failing to do something that results in harm to a child or puts a child at risk of harm. Child abuse can be physical, sexual [<https://medlineplus.gov/childsexualabuse.html>] or emotional. Neglect, or not providing for a child's needs, is also a form of abuse.

Most abused children suffer greater emotional than physical damage. An abused child may become depressed. He or she may withdraw, think of suicide or become violent. An older child may use drugs or alcohol, try to run away or abuse others.

Child abuse is a serious problem. If you suspect a child is being abused or neglected, call the police or your local child welfare agency.

## Start Here

- Child Abuse: The Hidden Bruises [[https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families\\_and\\_Youth/Facts\\_for\\_Families/FFF-Guide/Child-Abuse-The-Hidden-Bruises-005.aspx](https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Facts_for_Families/FFF-Guide/Child-Abuse-The-Hidden-Bruises-005.aspx)] (American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry)  
Also in Spanish [[https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families\\_and\\_Youth/Facts\\_for\\_Families/FFF-Spanish/El-Maltrato-Infantil-Los-Golpes-Ocultos-005.aspx](https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Facts_for_Families/FFF-Spanish/El-Maltrato-Infantil-Los-Golpes-Ocultos-005.aspx)]
- Child Trauma [<https://www.samhsa.gov/mental-health/trauma-violence/child-trauma>]  
(Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration)
- Definitions of Child Abuse and Neglect [<https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/safety-and-risk/definitions-child-abuse-and-neglect/?top=86>] (Children's Bureau)
- What Is Child Abuse and Neglect? Recognizing the Signs and Symptoms [[https://cwlibrary.childwelfare.gov/discovery/delivery/01CWIG\\_INST:01CWIG/1218592060007651](https://cwlibrary.childwelfare.gov/discovery/delivery/01CWIG_INST:01CWIG/1218592060007651)] (Children's Bureau) - PDF

## Prevention and Risk Factors

- Prevention [<https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/prevention/>] (Children's Bureau)

## Specifics

- Abusive Head Trauma (Shaken Baby Syndrome) [<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/shaken.html>] (Nemours Foundation)  
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/parents/shaken.html>]
- Shaken Baby Syndrome [<https://www.ninds.nih.gov/health-information/disorders/shaken-baby-syndrome>]  
 (National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke)  
Also in Spanish [<https://espanol.ninds.nih.gov/es/trastornos/sindrome-del-bebe-sacudido>]
- What Is Shaken Baby Syndrome? [<https://www.aapos.org/glossary/shaken-baby-syndrome>]  
(American Association for Pediatric Ophthalmology and Strabismus)

## Statistics and Research

- About Adverse Childhood Experiences [<https://www.cdc.gov/aces/about/>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

- About Violence Against Children and Youth Surveys [<https://www.cdc.gov/violence-against-children/about/>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- CDC Vital Signs: Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) [<https://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/ACEs/>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

## Clinical Trials

- ClinicalTrials.gov: Child Abuse [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?cond=%22Child+Abuse%22&aggFilters=status:not%20rec>] NIH (National Institutes of Health)

## Journal Articles

References and abstracts from MEDLINE/PubMed (National Library of Medicine)

- Article: Pediatric Bone Fractures: Challenges In Differential Diagnosis Between Child Abuse And... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40728335>]
- Article: White matter microstructure abnormalities in children experiencing neglect without other forms... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40715615>]
- Article: Polygenic risk scores for severe psychiatric disorders in bipolar disorders: associations... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40715078>]
- Child Abuse -- see more articles [<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/?term=%22Child+Abuse%22%5Bmajr%3Anoexp%5D+AND+child+%5Bmh%5D+AND+humans%5Bmh%5D+AND+english%5Bla%5D+AND+%22last+1+Year%22+%5Bedat%5D+NOT+%28letter%5Bpt%5D+OR+case+reports%5Bpt%5D+OR+editorial%5Bpt%5D+OR+comment%5Bpt%5D%29+AND+free+full+text%5Bsb%5D+>]

## Reference Desk

- National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System Glossary [[https://acf.gov/sites/default/files/documents/cb/ncands\\_glossary.pdf](https://acf.gov/sites/default/files/documents/cb/ncands_glossary.pdf)] (Administration for Children and Families) - PDF

## Find an Expert

- Administration for Children and Families [<https://acf.gov/>]
- American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry [<https://www.aacap.org/>]

## Children

- Abuse: What If I Need Help Right Now? [<https://kidshealth.org/en/kids/abuse-help.html>] **Easy-to-Read** (Nemours Foundation)  
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/kids/abuse-help.html>]
- Abuse: What Kids Need to Know [<https://kidshealth.org/en/kids/handle-abuse.html>] (Nemours Foundation)  
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/kids/handle-abuse.html>]
- Going to a Therapist [<https://kidshealth.org/en/kids/going-to-therapist.html>] (Nemours Foundation)  
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/kids/going-to-therapist.html>]

## Teenagers

- Abuse: What You Need to Know [<https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/family-abuse.html>] (Nemours Foundation)  
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/teens/abuse.html>]
- Going to a Therapist [<https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/therapist.html>] (Nemours Foundation)  
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/teens/therapist.html>]
- Youth and Teens Page [<https://www.1800runaway.org/youth-teens>] (National Runaway Safeline)

## Patient Handouts

- Child neglect and emotional abuse [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007225.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)

Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/007225.htm>]

- Child physical abuse [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001552.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)  
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/001552.htm>]
- Shaken baby syndrome [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007578.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)  
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/007578.htm>]



## MEDICAL ENCYCLOPEDIA

Child neglect and emotional abuse [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007225.htm>]

Child physical abuse [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001552.htm>]

Munchausen syndrome by proxy [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001555.htm>]

Shaken baby syndrome [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007578.htm>]

## Related Health Topics

Child Sexual Abuse [<https://medlineplus.gov/childsexualabuse.html>]

MedlinePlus links to health information from the National Institutes of Health and other federal government agencies.

MedlinePlus also links to health information from non-government Web sites. See our [disclaimer](#)

[<https://medlineplus.gov/disclaimers.html>] about external links and our [quality guidelines](#)

[<https://medlineplus.gov/criteria.html>] .

The information on this site should not be used as a substitute for professional medical care or advice. Contact a health care provider if you have questions about your health.

[Learn how to cite this page](#)