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Indicators of Sexual Abuse

There may be **physical indicators** that a child is being sexually abused. Some examples of this are:

- Torn, stained or bloody underclothing
- Bruises, lacerations, redness, swelling or bleeding in genital, vaginal or anal area
- Blood in urine or faeces
- Sexually transmitted disease
- Unusual or excessive itching or pain in the genital or anal area

There may also be **indicators in a child's behaviour** that could indicate sexual abuse.

Some examples of this in young children are:

- Age-inappropriate sexual play with toys, self, others
- Bizarre, sophisticated or unusual sexual knowledge
- Comments such as "I've got a secret", or "I don't like Uncle"
- Fire lighting by boys
- Fear of certain places eg bedroom or bathroom

Some examples of this in older children are:

- Eating disorders
- Promiscuity or prostitution
- Uses younger children in sexual acts
- Tries to make self as unattractive as possible

There may be **indicators in adult behaviour** that could indicate sexual abuse. Some examples of this are:

- May be unusually over-protective of a child
- Is jealous of a child's relationships with peers or other adults or is controlling of the child
- May favour the victim over other children
- Demonstrates physical contact or affection to a child which appears sexual in nature or has sexual overtones

More details and examples of indicators of sexual abuse are available in the book 'How Can I Tell?'. You can [view 'How Can I Tell?' online](#) or you can [order copies of 'How Can I Tell?'](#) through our shop.

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