

# Is my child being sexually abused?

## What are the warning signs?

Do you notice some of the following behaviours in children that you know well?

- nightmares, trouble sleeping, fear of the dark, or other sleeping problems
- extreme fear of “monsters”
- “spacing out” at odd times
- loss of appetite, or trouble eating or swallowing
- sudden mood swings, rage, fear, anger or withdrawal
- fear of certain people or places i.e. a child may not want to be left alone with a baby-sitter, a friend, a relative or some other child or adult, or a child who is usually talkative and cheery may become quiet and distant when around a certain person
- stomach illness all the time with no identifiable reason
- an older child behaving like a younger child, such as bed-wetting or thumb sucking
- sexual activities with toys or other children, such as simulating sex with dolls or asking other children/siblings to behave sexually
- new words for private body parts
- refusing to talk about a “secret” he/she has with an adult or older child
- talking about a new older friend
- suddenly having money
- cutting or burning herself or himself as an adolescent

Some of these behavioural signs can show up at other stressful times in a child's life such as divorce, the death of a family member, friend or pet, or when there are problems in school, as well as when abuse is involved.

Any one sign does not mean that the child is abused, but several of them mean that you should be asking some questions.

## Physical warning signs a child may have been sexually abused

Does a child close to you have

- unexplained bruises, redness, or bleeding of the child's genitals, anus or mouth
- pain at the genitals, anus or mouth
- genital sores or milky fluids in the genital area
- if you said yes to any of these examples, take your child to the doctor

Source... STOP IT NOW, MA

If you have questions about these or other signs,  
contact the CAS

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