

# Is Your Child being Sexually Abused?

## What are the warning signs?

- 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
- 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” they have with an adult or older child
- Suddenly having money
- Cutting or burning themselves as an adolescent



## Physical warning signs

- 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

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

Any one sign does not mean that the child is abused, but several of them mean that you should be asking some questions and contacting the Windsor-Essex Children’s Aid Society at 519-252-1171.

# Is Your Child being Sexually Abused?

The statistics are alarming and conservative! Estimates say that 1 in 5 girls and 1 in 10 boys have been sexually abused before the age of eighteen.

## Who are the abusers?

They are men, women, teenagers, and adults of all ages. 90% of the victims of child sexual abuse know their abusers. They are fathers, mothers, siblings, close relatives, friends, or other caretakers of children. They are rarely the monsters lurking around the corners of our playgrounds or driving by in their cars with the offer of candy!

Use this checklist. Do you know an adult or older child who:

- Refuses to let a child set any of their own limits?
- Insists on hugging, touching, kissing, tickling, wrestling with or holding a child even when the child does not want affection?
- Is overly interested in the sexuality of a particular child or teen?
- Talks repeatedly about a child's developing body or interferes with normal teen dating?
- Manages to get time alone or insists on time alone with a child with no interruptions?
- Spends their spare time with children and has little interest in spending time with someone their own age?
- Regularly offers to baby-sit many different children for free?
- Buys children expensive gifts or gives them money for no reason?
- Frequently walks in on children or teens in the bathroom?
- Allows children or teens to consistently get away with inappropriate behaviours?

**If you have answered 'yes' to any of these questions, DO NOT hesitate to contact the Windsor-Essex Children's Aid Society at 519-252-1171 for support and guidance. Remember to trust your instinct and report any suspicious behaviour.**

# Is Your Child being Sexually Abused?

It is important to teach children about safety. It is just as important to teach ourselves what we need to know in order to keep our children and communities safe. Here are some things that you and your family can do to prevent the likelihood of child abuse occurring in your family.

## Adults need to take responsibility

- Watch for signs of abuse—many children, especially young ones are not able to protect themselves sexually
- Teach your children that their “no” will be respected; whether it is in playing and tickling or hugging and kissing. If your child does not want to give their grandfather a kiss let them shake his hand.
- All members of the family have rights to privacy in dressing, bathing, sleeping; and other personal activities. If anyone does not respect these rights an adult should clearly tell them the family rules.
- Report anything you know or suspect that is sexual abuse. Without help the abuse will not stop.

**Make a plan and teach your children about what to do and whom to talk to if they are sexually threatened or molested by someone. It is also important to list for yourself whom you can call for advice, information, and help if you need it.**

## Adults need to learn, teach and practice

- Practice talking to other adults about the difficult topic. Say words out loud so that you become more comfortable using them, ask questions and confront behaviour.
- Practice talking with both the adults and children in your life about their difficult issues to get them in the habit of talking to you. Show them that you will listen to what they say even if it may be embarrassing.
- Teach children the proper names of their body parts; this helps them to understand their bodies, to ask questions that need to be asked, and to tell about sexual abuse.
- Teach children the difference between OK touching and touching that is not OK. Tell younger children to talk to you if anyone touches their private parts
- Teach children that secrets about touching are **not** okay

(Source: STOP IT NOW, MA)

# Is Your Child being Sexually Abused?

If a person has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is or may be in need of protection, the person must promptly report the suspicion and the information about which it is based to their local Children's Aid Society.

If a person has made a previous report about a child and has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is or may be in need of protection, that person must make a further report to a Children's Aid Society. The person must make the report directly to a Children's Aid Society and must not rely on anyone else to report on their behalf.

Both professionals and the general public have a duty to report. This is outlined in the *Child and Family Services Act*. Any professional who fails to report a suspicion that a child is or may be in need of protection is liable on conviction to a fine of up to \$1000.



If you are concerned about a child in the community and believe they may be in need of protection, please call the Windsor-Essex Children's Aid Society at 519-252-1171