

Signs of Sexual Abuse:

Physical signs of sexual abuse are not common, although redness, rashes/swelling in the genital area can cause rise of concern.

- Bleeding, bruising, swelling, tears or other physical trauma in genital area
- Pain, itching or burning in genital area
- Difficulty walking, or sitting
- Frequent urinary or yeast infections
- Sexually transmitted disease or genital warts
- Sudden increased illness such as headaches or stomachaches

Emotional or behavioral signals are more common. These can run from "too perfect" behavior, to withdrawal and depression, to unexplained anger and rebellion.

- Exhibits adult-like sexual behaviors, language, and knowledge
- Leaves "clues" that seem likely to provoke a discussion about sexual issues
- Writes, draws, plays, or dreams of sexual or frightening images
- Refuses to talk about a secret shared with an adult or older child
- Develops new or unusual fear of certain people or places
- Thinks of self or body as repulsive, dirty, or bad
- Sudden lack in interest of friends, school or other activities
- Bedwetting or soiling accidents unrelated to toilet training and with no medical reason
- Has nightmares, night terrors or other sleep problems
- Seems distracted or distant at odd times
- Sudden change in eating habits- increased appetite or refuses to eat
- Change in attitude or mood swings: rage, fear, insecurity, or withdrawal, rebellion or withdrawal
- Changes in hygiene, such as refusing to bathe or disrobe
- Reluctance to be alone with certain persons
- Talks about a new older friend
- Overly compliant or protective of siblings- assumes caretaker role to avoid access by perpetrator
- Suddenly has money, toys, or other gifts without reason

Indicators often seen in teens that have been sexually abused:

- Self-injury (cutting, burning)
- Inadequate personal hygiene
- Drug and alcohol abuse
- Sexual promiscuity
- Running away from home
- Depression, anxiety
- Suicide attempts
- Fear of intimacy or closeness

All of the warning signs listed above are general indicators of sexual abuse in children. Hints of sexual abuse or disclosures of sexual abuse should always be considered as sexual abuse to be reported.

Source: Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services