



Behavioral and Physical Signs of Possible Sexual Abuse

1. Symptoms of anxiety

These include unexplained sleep disturbances (sweats, terrors, nightmares); showing a new or unusual fear of certain people, places or locations; having unexplained periods of panic or alarm.

2. Abnormal sexual behaviors or symptoms

These behaviors and symptoms include excessive masturbation; leaving 'clues' that appear to intentionally invite discussion of sexual issues; complaining of pain while using the toilet, or exhibiting symptoms of a sexually transmitted disease such as an offensive odor; resistance to removal of clothing at appropriate times (bath, bed, toilet, diaper change); any symptom indicating evidence of physical traumas to the genital or anal area; engaging in persistent sexual play with friends, toys or pets; initiating sophisticated sexual behaviors, language, or knowledge; asking an unusual amount of questions about human sexuality.

3. Changes in personality or mood

Changes include unusually aggressive behavior toward family members, friends, toys, and pets; indicating a sudden reluctance to be alone with a certain person; withdrawing from previously enjoyable activities, like school including changes in academic performance.

4. General behavioral changes

These can include beginning to wet the bed, experiencing a loss of appetite or other changes in eating habits, including trouble swallowing; developing frequent unexplained health problems; regression to behaviors too young for the stage of development previously achieved; engaging in self-mutilations, such as sticking themselves with pins or cutting themselves.

5. Changes in beliefs or discussions

These changes can include refusal to talk about a secret shared with an adult or an older child; discussions about a new, older friend; suddenly thinks of self or body as dirty, repulsive, or bad.

Physical signs of sexual abuse are rare. If you see the signs, bring your child to a doctor or call the police immediately.