

Child abuse



INTRODUCTION



Child abuse is when a parent or caregiver, whether through action or failing to act, causes injury, death, emotional harm or risk of serious harm to a child. There are many forms of child maltreatment, including neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse, exploitation, and emotional abuse. Adults can experience a range of psychological, emotional and social problems related to childhood abuse.

Definition



- ☞ Child abuse is any action by another person – adult or child – that causes significant harm to a child. It can be physical, sexual or emotional, but can just as often be about a lack of love, care and attention.
- ☞ An abused child will often experience more than one type of abuse, as well as other difficulties in their lives.

Demographics



The total abuse rate of children is 25.2 per 1,000 children, with physical abuse accounting for 5.7 per 1,000, sexual abuse 2.5 per 1,000, emotional abuse 3.4 per 1,000, and neglect accounting for 15.9 per 1,000 children.

These categories overlap, with sexual and physical abuse often occurring together; physical abuse or neglect seldom occur without emotional abuse.

Types of Child Abuse



- ❧ Emotional abuse
- ❧ Neglect
- ❧ Physical abuse
- ❧ Family violence
- ❧ Sexual abuse

EMOTIONAL ABUSE



Emotional abuse



Emotional abuse refers to the psychological and social aspects of child abuse; it is the most common form of child abuse.

Causes of Emotional abuse

- ❧ Parents have negative attitudes towards children
- ❧ Perceive parents as unrewarding and difficult to enjoy,
- ❧ They associate their own negative feelings with the child's difficult behaviour,
- ❧ Poor parenting methods.
- ❧ Parental mental health problems
- ❧ Domestic violence,
- ❧ Drug and alcohol misuse,
- ❧ Being abused or having been in care as children

Signs in childhood



- ❧ Emotionally abused children exhibit a range of specific signs. They often:
- ❧ Feel unhappy, frightened and distressed
- ❧ Behave aggressively and anti-socially, or they may act too mature for their age
- ❧ Experience difficulties with academic achievement and school attendance
- ❧ Find it difficult to make friends
- ❧ Show signs of physical neglect and malnourishment
- ❧ Experience incontinence and mysterious pains.

Signs in adulthood



- ❧ Adults emotionally abused as children are more likely to
- ❧ Experience mental health problems and difficulties in personal relationships.
- ❧ Psychological and psychosocial problems associated with multiple forms of trauma in childhood

NEGLECT



Neglect



- ❧ "Neglect" refers to a range of circumstances in which a parent or caregiver fails to adequately provide for a child's needs:
- ❧ Physical :
 - ❧ Through the provision of food, shelter and clothing
 - ❧ By exercising adequate supervision and control of the child



☞ By ensuring their access to medical care when necessary

☞ By ensuring that the child regularly attends school

☞ Emotional :

☞ By providing them with care, love and support

☞ By showing appropriate moral and legal guidance

CAUSES



- ❧ Socioeconomic status.
- ❧ Number of children
- ❧ Stress
- ❧ Psychological problem
- ❧ Drug and alcohol misuse,
- ❧ Being abused or having been in care as children
- ❧ Strict behaviour

Signs of neglect



- ☞ Unhappy
- ☞ Aggressive
- ☞ Hungry
- ☞ Weak
- ☞ Poor personal hygiene

PHYSICAL ABUSE

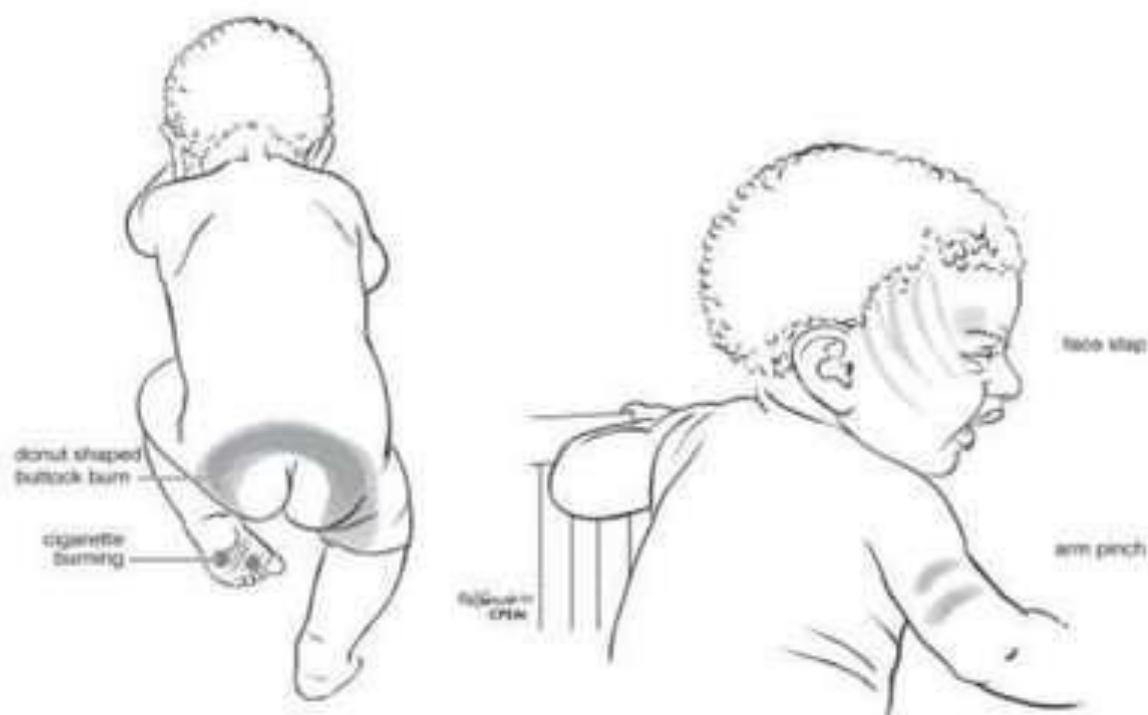


Figure 2. Physical signs of child abuse (inflicted burns and slap and pinch marks)

Physical abuse



Physical abuse may be hitting, slapping, kicking or striking with an object to children.



Visual diagnose of child with physical abuse



Looped cord mark



Strangulation mark



Immersion burns



Coin rubbing



Cupping

Characteristics of parents who physically abuse children



- ❧ Emotional impairment,
- ❧ Substance abuse,
- ❧ Lack of social support,
- ❧ Presence of domestic violence and
- ❧ A history of childhood abuse

Signs in childhood



Physically abused children find it difficult relating to their peers and the adults around them.

They are also vulnerable to "emotional storms", or instances of overwhelming emotional responses to everyday situations.

These "storms" can take the form of profound grief, fear, or rage.

❧ Physically abused children may also have problems with:



- ❧ Academic achievement
- ❧ Physical development and coordination
- ❧ Developing friendships and relationships
- ❧ Aggression and anger management
- ❧ Depression, anxiety and low self-esteem.
- ❧ Marks over the body
- ❧ Fracture
- ❧ Anxiety
- ❧ Fear

Signs in adulthood



- ⌘ Aggressive
- ⌘ Violent behaviour, or shy and
- ⌘ Avoidant behaviour leading to rejection or revictimisation.



FAMILY VIOLENCE

Family violence



Family violence, or domestic violence, usually refers to the physical assault of children and women by male relatives, usually a father and husband/partner.

In these situations, a man uses violence to control his partner and children, often in the belief that violence is a male prerogative ("I'm a guy, I can't control myself"), or that his victims are responsible for his behaviour ("You bought it on yourself").

Signs in childhood



- ❧ A child witnessing family violence, and domestic violence, is at risk of:
- ❧ Behavioural and emotional difficulties
- ❧ Learning difficulties
- ❧ Long-term developmental problems
- ❧ Aggressive language and behaviour
- ❧ Restlessness, anxiety and depression

Sexual abuse



Sexual abuse describes any incident in an adult engages a minor in a sexual act, or exposes the minor to inappropriate sexual behaviour or material.

Sexual abuse also describes any incident in which a child is coerced into sexual activity by another child.



A person may sexually abuse a child using threats and physical force, but sexual abuse often involves subtle forms of manipulation, in which the child is coerced into believing that the activity is an expression of love, or that the child bought the abuse upon themselves.

Sexual abuse involves contact and non-contact offences.

Signs in childhood



- ✎ Withdrawn, unhappy and suicidal behaviour
- ✎ Self-harm and suicidality
- ✎ Aggressive and violent behaviour
- ✎ Bedwetting, sleep problems, nightmares
- ✎ Eating problems e.g. anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa
- ✎ Mood swings
- ✎ Detachment
- ✎ Pains for no medical reason
- ✎ Sexual behaviour, language, or knowledge too advanced for their age

Signs in adulthood



- ❧ Adults sexually abused as children have poorer mental health than other adults.
- ❧ They are more likely to have a history of eating disorders, depression, substance abuse, and suicide attempts.
- ❧ Sexual abuse is also associated with financial problems in adulthood, and a decreased likelihood to graduate from high school or undertake further education.

INVESTIGATION



- ❧ **Physical examination** will detect injuries such as
 - ❧ Bruises
 - ❧ Burns
 - ❧ Swelling
 - ❧ retinal hemorrhages (bleeding in the back of the eye)
 - ❧ internal damage such as bleeding or rupture of an organ
 - ❧ fractures of long bones or spiral-type fractures that result from twisting, and fractured ribs or skull.



- ❧ **X rays** and another imaging techniques, such as **MRI or scans**, may confirm or reveal other internal injuries.
- ❧ The presence of injuries at different stages of healing (i.e., having occurred at different times) is nearly always indicative of child abuse.



MANAGEMENT

Management



- ❧ Medical treatment for battered child syndrome will vary according to the type of injury incurred.
- ❧ Counselling and the implementation of an intervention plan for the child's parents or guardians are necessary.
- ❧ The child abuser may be incarcerated, and/or the abused child removed from the home to prevent further harm.



- ❧ Decisions regarding placement of the child with an outside caregiver or returning the child to the home will be determined by an appropriate government agency working within the court system, based on the severity of the abuse and the likelihood of recurrence.
- ❧ Both physical and psychological therapy is often recommended as treatment for the abused child.



☞ If the child has siblings, the authorities should determine where they have also been abused, for about 20 percent of siblings of abused children are also shown to exhibit signs of physical abuse.



PROGNOSIS

Prognosis



The prognosis for child abuse will depend on the severity of injury, actions taken by the authorities to ensure the future safety of the injured child, and the willingness of parents or guardians to seek counselling for themselves as well as for the child.



PREVENTION

Prevention



- ❧ Recognizing the potential for child abuse and the seeking or offering of intervention, counselling, and training in good parenting skills before battered child syndrome occurs is the best way to prevent abuse.
- ❧ The use of educational programs to teach caregivers good parenting skills and to be aware of abusive behaviors so that they seek help for abusive tendencies is critical to stopping abuse.



- Support from the extended family , friends, clergy, or other supportive persons or groups may also be effective in preventing abuse.
- Signs that physical abuse may occur include parental alcohol or substance abuse; high stress factors in the family life; previous abuse of the child or the child's siblings; history of mental or emotional problems in parents; parents abused as children; absence of visible parental love or concern for the child; and neglect of the child's hygiene.

Parental concerns



- ☞ Parents who are in danger of abusing their children (for example, when they find themselves becoming inappropriately or excessively angry in response to a child's behavior) should seek professional counselling.
- ☞ Counselling through a parenting or caretaking crisis and offered guidance about how to better handle the situation.



ROLE OF NURSE

ROLE OF NURSE



☞ Physical Care

- ☞ Abuse victims often require physical nursing care. In the emergency room, this may include cleaning wounds or applying a dressing.
- ☞ If injuries are severe, the patient may need surgery and nursing care during the convalescent period.
- ☞ The nurse might provide medications for pain or help the patient learn to walk with crutches.
- ☞ In addition, victims of abuse may need education for self-management if they have injuries that will take some time to heal, such as broken bones.



❧ Emotional Support

- ❧ The empathetic nurse can help provide emotional support by listening and allowing patients to express whatever they feel.
- ❧ Children may respond to the gift of a stuffed toy to which they can confide all the bad things that have happened to them.
- ❧ The older adult may be ashamed to admit that her children are abusing her.



- ❧ Nurses offer an opportunity to talk about feelings and may also be able to suggest a referral to a counsellor who is experienced in dealing with abuse victims.
- ❧ The nurse may also be the first person to recognize symptoms of depression or suicidal intent in an abuse victim

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THANK YOU