10 Signs of Child Abuse

Our mission is to restore dignity, hope, and trust to children traumatized by abuse and neglect.

1. **Changes in behavior.** Abuse can lead to many changes in behavior. Abused children often appear scared, anxious, depressed, withdrawn or more aggressive.

2. **Returning to earlier behaviors.** Abused children may display behaviors shown at earlier ages, such as thumb-sucking, bedwetting, fear of the dark or fear of strangers. For some children, even loss of acquired language or memory problems may be an issue.

3. **Fear of going home.** Abused children may express apprehension or anxiety about leaving school or about going places with the person who is abusing them or exhibit an unusual fear of a familiar person or place.

4. **Changes in eating.** The stress, fear and anxiety caused by abuse can lead to changes in a child’s eating behavior, which may result in weight gain or weight loss.

5. **Changes in sleeping.** Abused children may have frequent nightmares or have difficulty falling asleep and as a result may appear tired or fatigued.

6. **Changes in school performance and attendance.** Abused children may have difficulty concentrating in school or have excessive absences, sometimes due to adults trying to hide the child’s injuries from authorities.

7. **Lack of personal care or hygiene.** Abused and neglected children may appear uncared for. They may present as consistently dirty and have severe body odor, or they may lack sufficient clothing for the weather.

8. **Risk-taking behaviors.** Young people who are being abused may engage in high-risk activities such as using drugs or alcohol or carrying a weapon.

9. **Inappropriate sexual behaviors.** Children who have been sexually abused may exhibit overly sexualized behavior or use explicit sexual language and may exhibit symptoms of a genital infection.

10. **Unexplained injuries.** Children who have been physically abused may exhibit unexplained burns or bruises in the shape of objects. You may also hear unconvincing explanations of a child’s injuries.

*Be aware that some children may show ALL or NONE of the signs above. Trust your instincts. Suspicion of abuse is enough of a reason to take action.*

Child Protective Services 800.252.5400
San Antonio Police Department 911 or 210.207.7273
Bexar County Sheriff’s Department 210.335.6000
CHRISTUS Santa Rosa Children’s Hospital 210.704.2190
Methodist Specialty and Transplant Hospital 210.575.8168