



Grooming Behaviors and Warning Signs

Grooming is a process by which an offender gradually draws a victim into a sexual relationship by developing trust and creating secrecy. Grooming behavior includes:

- Paying special attention, arranging outings, and providing gifts
- Isolating the child from others
- Filling the unmet needs or role in a child's life
- Treating the child as if he or she is older
- Gradually crossing physical boundaries and becoming increasingly intimate or sexual
- Using threats, blame or secrecy to maintain and assert control

Signs of sexual abuse:

- Knowledge a sexual topic that goes beyond a child's developmental stage.
- Removing clothing at inappropriate times
- Depression or actions of self-harm
- Changes in eating habits
- Withdrawn from previously regular interactions
- Trying to avoid certain place or people
- Having unexplained money, gifts, or toys
- Running away from home
- Regressive behavior such as thumb sucking or bed wetting
- Unexplained injuries, especially to the genital area
- Persistent or recurring pain with urination
- Unexplained physical symptoms such as headaches or stomachaches
- Pain or bleeding in the genitals, anus, or mouth

Believe a child if they report abuse to you!

What You Need to Know About Child Sexual Abuse

Contact Abuse- Abuse that involves physical touch. This includes sexual touching of any kind, with or without clothing, including penetration of the genitals¹.

Non-Contact Abuse- Abuse that does not involve direct physical contact. This includes exposure of sexual body parts to a child or asking a child to expose their own body parts; exposing children to pornography; encouraging children to perform sexual acts on themselves; communicating in a sexual manner with a child or encouraging a child to engage in voyeurism or exhibitionism¹.

Vulnerabilities: Children who live with a single parent that has a live-in partner are 20 times more likely to be sexually abused than children who live with both biological parents. Children who live with only one biological parent are 10 times more likely to be sexually abused than children who live with both biological parents² The risk for sexual abuse triples for children whose parent(s) are unemployed³. Children who are victims or witnesses of domestic abuse are significantly more likely to be sexually abused.

Future Impact: Female victims of sexual abuse are 2.2 times more likely to experience teen pregnancy⁴. Adult female victims experience substance abuse problems at a rate nearly 3 times the general population, while male victims are 2.6 times more likely than the general population to develop substance abuse issues⁵. Eating disorders and obesity are 4 times more likely to be experienced by female victims of sexual abuse by the time she reaches 24-years old than non-abused peers⁶.

▪ 1 in 10 children on average will be sexually abused before their 18th birthday^{7*}.

*non-contact abuse cases only

• Children under the age of 18 make up 44% of all reported rapes with penetration⁸.

• Children aged 12-17 have victimization rates for sexual assault 2.3 times higher than adults⁹.

• 81% of child sexual abuse incidents occur in the child's home¹⁰.

• 90% of victims know their abuser¹¹.

• Children are vulnerable to abuse at all ages but are most vulnerable between the ages of seven and 13 years old¹².

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- ³ Sedlak, A.J., Mettenburg, J., Basena, M., Petta, I., McPherson, K., Greene, A., and Li, S. (2010). Fourth National Incidence Study of Child Abuse and Neglect (NIS-4): Report to Congress, Executive Summary. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families.
- ⁴ Noll, J. G., Shenk, C. E., & Putnam, K. T. (2009). Childhood sexual abuse and adolescent pregnancy: A meta-analytic update. *Journal of Pediatric Psychology*, 34, 366-378.
- ⁵ Simpson, T.L. & Miller, W.R. (2002). Concomitance between childhood sexual and physical abuse and substance use problems: A review. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 22, 27-77
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- ⁷ Townsend, C., & Rheingold, A.A., (2013). Estimating a child sexual abuse prevalence rate for practitioners: studies.
- ⁸ National Crime Victimization Survey, Statistic calculated by staff at Crimes against Children Research Center. 2002
- ⁹ Tebbutt, J., Swanston, H., Oates, R. K., O'Toole, B.I. (1997). Five years after child sexual abuse: Persisting dysfunction and problems of prediction. *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, 36, 330-339
- ¹⁰ Snyder, H. N. (2000). Sexual assault of young children as reported to law enforcement: Victim, incident, and offender characteristics. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics. Retrieved January 12, 2009 from <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/saycrle.pdf>
- ¹¹ Finkelhor, D. (2012). Characteristics of crimes against juveniles. Durham, NH: Crimes against Children Research Center
- ¹² Finkelhor, D. (1994). Current information on the scope and nature of child sexual abuse. *The Future of Children*, Vol. 4, No. 2, Sexual Abuse of Children, pp. 31-53
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