

What is child sexual abuse?

Child sexual abuse is a form of child abuse in which a child is used for the sexual gratification of an adult or older adolescent. In addition to direct sexual contact, child sexual abuse also occurs when an adult exposes their genitals to a child, asks or pressures a child to engage in sexual activities, displays pornography to a child, or uses a child to produce child pornography. Child sexual abuse is a crime under the Criminal Code of Canada.

Who could this happen to?

Current research shows that 1 in 3 girls and 1 in 5 boys will be sexually abused before the age of 18. It can happen to any child.

Who could do this?

Children are sexually abused most often by people who have the easiest access to them: parents, siblings, relatives, sports coaches, neighbors, and babysitters. In 85% of cases the offender is known to the child, and in 40% the offender was a father-figure.

Age of Consent

In May 2008 the legal Age of Consent to sexual activity in Canada became 16. Sexual activity where the age of one person is less than 16 and the age of the other person is 5 years or more above the younger party, can not be consented to by the younger person – making it a sexual assault.

The law includes a "close-in-age exception," meaning 12 & 13-year-olds can have **consensual** sex with someone who is less than 2 years older, and 14 and 15-year-olds can have **consensual** sex with someone who is less than five years older than they are, without it being a crime in Canada.

For information and support:

Sexual Abuse Intervention Program

250-847-9000

**Confidential counseling, emotional
support and information**

BV District Hospital

250-847-2611

Smithers RCMP

250-847-3233

Passage Transition House

Crisis Line 250-847-2595

**Safe housing for all women &
children who are victims of violence.
Support workers available 24/7.**

Specialized Victim Assistance

250-847-9000

**Confidential support and criminal
justice system information for
victims of sexual assault**

Victim Link

1-800-563-0808

**Crisis Line staffed 24 hours per day
Information, support and referrals**

Child Sexual Abuse: Information for Parents



**You and your child
are not alone**

What might your child be thinking and feeling?

Children who have experienced sexual abuse often experience significant feelings of guilt and responsibility; both for the abuse that occurred in the first place and for the disruption and fall-out after disclosure. They may also be experiencing feelings of anger, mistrust, confusion, anxiety, fear, depression, and a whole host of other feelings at the same time.

Children who don't find safe ways to talk about their feelings, or who do not receive supportive responses after disclosing the abuse, may act out in many different ways, including:

- Regression: bedwetting, tantrums
- Early childhood fears return
- Difficulty concentrating
- Fights at school & at home
- Becomes withdrawn & shy
- Loses interest in activities
- Has trouble sleeping
- Separation anxiety
- Stomach and headaches
- Avoidance of certain people

What can you do for your child?

It is important to remember that your reaction to hearing your child has been sexually abused will have a strong affect on him/her – it will perhaps have the biggest effect of all. Your child will watch your body language, your voice, and your actions for clues in how to feel about what has happened. Remain calm, reassuring, and supportive. Your child has done nothing wrong, and that is the message you want them to get from you. Express your feelings to other adults, not to your child.

* **TAKE IMMEDIATE ACTION** to stop the abuse and ensure your child's safety.

* **BELIEVE** what your child tells you. Research shows that children recover more quickly when they are believed.

* **LISTEN** to what your child says. Be present in the moment, unrushed and calm, and let them express themselves without judgment.

* **SUPPORT** your child for speaking out - tell them they have done the right thing.

* **REINFORCE** to your child that what happened was not their fault. Adults are responsible for their actions. Children are not responsible for the actions of adults.

* **REASSURE** them that they are safe now.

* **MAINTAIN DAILY ROUTINES** to the best of your ability. Normalcy is reassuring.

* **SPEND HAPPY TIME** with your child.

* **GET SUPPORT FOR YOURSELF.** Seek out people you feel safe talking to – this can be family, friends, counselors, victim services.

* **GET SUPPORT FOR YOUR CHILD.** Research services in your community.

* **MAKE A SAFETY PLAN** with your child to promote feelings of security.

* **SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION** and speak to the doctor privately first.

* **REPORT TO RCMP** immediately if the child is under the age of 13. Under certain circumstances, mature youth over 13 may choose when and if to report.

BOOKS FOR KIDS

● Brave Bart: A Story for Traumatized and Grieving Children by Caroline Sheppard

● Secrets That Hurt Jim & Joan Boulden

● It Happens to Boys Too by Jane Satullo & Russell Bradway

ONLINE RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS AND PARENTS

● Information on Internet Safety:

http://www.cybertip.ca/app/en/age_spec#anchor_menu

● Free safety planning tools for children of all ages.
www.kidsintheknow.ca

● Canadian Center for Child Protection
<http://www.protectchildren.ca/app/en>