

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.

ONLINE RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS AND PARENTS

- Canadian Center for Child Protection:
<http://www.protection.ca>
- For several free activities you can do at home try
www.kidsintheknow.ca

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

Specialized Victim Assistance:

250-847-9000

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

Passage Transition House

250-847-2595

Crisis Line staffed 24 hours per day

Victim Link: 1-800-563-0808

Crisis Line staffed 24 hours per day

Information, support and referrals

Child Sexual Abuse: Strategies for Prevention



**Keeping children safe
takes parents, families
and communities all
working together.**

To help children protect themselves, provide them with the knowledge, skills and confidence to ask for help or to express their worries or discomfort, at any time. Ask your children about their activities and their feelings, and **listen** to their answers. Your daily interest in what they have to say will help them feel encouraged to keep talking.

Encourage and support your children to think critically and to express their ideas. Show through your own actions that it is healthy to question what you are told, and to challenge behaviors that are inappropriate. Keep lines of communication open all the time, regardless of the age of the child.

BOOKS FOR KIDS

* Boys, Girls and Body Science by Meg Hickling

* What's The Big Secret? Talking About Sex to Girls and Boys by Laurie Krasny Brown

* Where Did I Come From? By Peter Mayle

* Not In Room 204 by Shannon Riggs
Books by Robbie H. Harris:

* A First Look At My Amazing Body (4+)

* It's Not The Stork (7+)

* Eggs, Sperms, Birth, Babies and Families (7+)

* It's Perfectly Normal (10+)

WHAT PARENTS CAN DO:

❖ TALK & TEACH

- Teach your children about their rights – including the right to say NO to an authority figure.
- Talk to your child about sexuality. Go to the public library for age-appropriate books that introduce children to topics like sexuality, healthy bodies and hygiene.
- It is imperative that children have the language to be able to disclose sexual behaviors. Teach your children to be on a first name basis with their bodies, and comfortably use these words yourself.

❖ SAFETY PLANNING

- Encourage your children to tell you whenever they are confused or disturbed by an interaction with an adult. Make sure they realize that it is the adult and not the child who is responsible for respecting boundaries.
- When your child tells you something happened, BELIEVE them. Being disbelieved will silence them in the future.
- Discuss the differences between 'good touching' and 'bad touching', 'good secrets' and 'bad secrets'. Those who abuse children prey on confusion about trust, authority and secrecy.

- Make a list with your child of safe and trusted adults that *they* feel they can go to for help (i.e. parent, auntie, teacher, etc.). Ask the child to identify these people by name and write them down together, along with their phone numbers. This list can be kept in your child's backpack.
- Help your child to memorize important phone numbers where they could get help.
- Encourage your child to use the Buddy System at school & during after school activities.
- Be sensitive to your children's behavior and emotions. Watch for indications that your child is uncomfortable with certain adults, and watch for other signs of abuse such as sudden behavior changes.
- Take precautions in your child's potential exposure to offenders. You have the right to determine how and with whom your child spends time. If you do not feel comfortable with them spending the night at a certain friend's house, trust your instincts!
- Teach your child about their feelings. Teach them to trust their feelings.
- Tell your child that if they ever need you to come and get them, you will do it no matter what time it is, and that you will not be upset they called.