

Types of abuse

Child abuse is often categorised into four types: physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and neglect.

Physical abuse → when someone intentionally causes physical harm to a child.

Signs to look out for →

- Bruises
- Scarring
- Burns or scalds
- Fractures
- Bite marks
- Drowsiness, seizures and vomiting.

Emotional abuse → refers to the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development.

Signs to look out for →

- Lacking social skills
- Having few friendships
- Seeming isolated from their parents or carers
- Using language inappropriate for their age
- Struggling to control emotions
- Lacking confidence and being anxious
- Being aggressive to other children
- Younger children being overly affectionate or clingy towards strangers.

Sexual abuse → involves the forcing or enticing of a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening.

Signs to look out for →

- Appearing afraid to socialise or interact with a certain person
- Unexplained injuries or bruises
- Pregnancy
- Sexually transmitted infections or urinary tract infections
- The use of sexual language inappropriate for their age
- Secretiveness.

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Neglect → persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development.

Signs to look out for →

- Appearing hungry as though they may have gone without breakfast
- Being without adequate clothing
- Appearing to care for family members
- Skin sores, rashes, flea bites, scabies or ringworm
- Having poor hygiene
- Repeated injuries caused by lack of supervision.

⚠ **Remember** that there is often significant overlap between the different types of abuse.