

Behaviors & Indicators

While the presence of the following behaviors does not mean that a child has been sexually abused, a pattern of these behaviors usually indicates that a problem exists. It is important to talk with a child who exhibits a pattern of behavioral problems and to seek any necessary help.

1. Abrupt change in behavior
 2. Clinging, whining*
 3. Excessive fear of being touched
 4. Fear of being alone
 5. Refusal to go to a certain place or be with a certain person
 6. Nightmares or other sleep disturbances
 7. Regression to more infantile behavior such as wetting, thumb-sucking, fecal soiling*
 8. Change in appetite, eating disorders
 9. Excessive masturbation
 10. Developmentally inappropriate knowledge of sexual acts and sexual language*
 11. Precocious sex play such as attempts at sexual intercourse*
 12. Genital and rectal trauma, abrasions-may be evidenced by torn, stained, or bloody clothing
 13. Vaginal or uteral discharge, infection or sexually transmitted disease-often evidenced by difficulty in urinating, scratching and tugging at clothing around genital area
 14. Unexplained gagging
 15. Withdrawal and isolation from peers
 16. Increase in physical complaints
 17. Acting out and attention getting behavior such as shoplifting, stealing, fire starting, physical aggression
 18. Depression, physical self-abuse, suicide attempts/threats
 19. School problems, truancy, drop in academic performance
 20. Prostitution or promiscuous sexual behavior
 21. Poor self-image-reflected in dress, cleanliness, appearance
 22. Alcohol/drug abuse
 23. Reluctance to undress for physical education classes
 24. Excessive bathing
 25. Pregnancy
 26. Attraction to older men or dislike of men
 27. Required to assume household and child care responsibilities
 28. Social activities have been unreasonably restricted
 29. Chronic running away
- (*Evident primarily in younger children)