

For leaflet “Child Protection -- We All Have a Duty”

Further information on sexual abuse is as follows.

Myths vs Reality about Sexual Abuse

Myths

- ☒ The forms of sexual abuse are only rape, incest and indecent assault.

- ☒ Children are sexually abused only by strangers.

- ☒ Only girls are sexually abused.

Reality

- ☑ Other than these offensive behaviours, some acts without physical contact, such as indecent exposure, procuring a child to masturbate others/expose his/her sexual organs, or to pose in an obscene way/watch sexual activities of others/pornographic movies, videos or publications, etc., production of pornographic material, etc. are also acts of sexual abuse.

Sexual abuse also includes designedly establishing a relationship/an emotional connection with a child by various means for gaining his/her trust with an intent to sexually abuse him/her (e.g. communicating with a child through mobile phone or the Internet).

Even for consensual sexual activity between an adolescent and another person, it may also be regarded as sexual abuse if it involves sexual exploitation by a person who, by his/her characteristics, is in a position of differential power to the adolescent.

- ☑ In most cases, the perpetrators are known to the child. They are authority figures whom the child trusts and loves. They may even be relatives of the child. The perpetrators often engage the child in sex or sexual acts by persuasions, rewards, tricks or even coercion.
- ☑ Boys can also be victims of sexual abuse by perpetrators of the same or opposite sex.

Possible Indicators of Sexual Abuse

Most children having been sexually abused cannot, are unwilling or afraid to, disclose their abusive experience. They may be convinced or threatened by the perpetrators that they must not tell anyone about it. Children being sexually abused may have behavioural, emotional or physical changes. Adults need to be aware of the following indicators of a child:

Physical Indicators

- Complaints of pain, swelling or itching in the genital area
- Bowel control or bladder control weakened despite toilet trained
- Repeated urinary tract infection
- Sexually transmitted disease
- Pregnancy

Behavioural Indicators

- Knowledge about sex or sexual behaviour that is beyond the expectation for the age of the child
- Child showing particular interest in body parts of adults or touching adults' sensitive body parts repeatedly
- Enacting/reproducing scenes of sexual abuse in play or daily behaviour
- Child of an older age habitually shares the same bed with his/her parent of the opposite sex
- Child with adequate self-care abilities whose carer often takes care of his/her personal hygiene/care matters (e.g. bathing, cleaning after toileting, changing clothes, etc.)
- Excessive masturbation
- Extreme fear of being left alone, unwilling to have eye contacts with others
- Highly resistant to stay at somewhere or with someone/a specific sex/individual(s) of a certain identity
- Frequent nightmares, difficulties in sleeping soundly or insomnias
- Depressed, feeling inferior, and even with self-harm or suicidal tendency
- Behavioural problems (e.g. anorexia/bulimia, obesity, self-harm, running away from home, suicide, promiscuity, alcoholism and drug abuse)

The above indicators are only for reference. If any of the above indicators are observed, further exploration is advised to be made.

What should I do if I suspect a child has been sexually abused?

Dos

- ✓ Keep a calm and trustful manner
- ✓ Talk to the child in a safe environment
- ✓ Encourage the child to disclose what has happened so as to understand the situation
- ✓ Assure the child that you understand his/her feelings and will handle his/her problem seriously
- ✓ Assure the child that he/she is doing the right thing in disclosing the sexual abuse incident
- ✓ Let the child know that sexual abuse is wrong and should not be kept secret
- ✓ Let the child know that it is not his/her fault to be sexually abused

Don'ts

- ✗ Become too agitated, adopt a biased/suspicious manner
- ✗ Make judgmental comments
- ✗ Ask hypothetical or leading questions
- ✗ Indifferent/apathetic

If a child discloses to have been sexually abused:

Dos

- ✓ Seek help immediately from professionals, such as social worker, the Police or doctor, etc.

Don'ts

- ✗ Comment or blame the perpetrator in front of the child
- ✗ Request the child to conceal the incident for fear of consequences of the disclosure
- ✗ Blame the child for seducing/allowing others to have sexual acts with him/her
- ✗ Query what the child said

In case of doubt:

- ✓ You can seek help from professionals, such as social worker, the Police or doctor, etc.

How to Prevent Sexual Abuse?

- Let children understand the following:
 - Perpetrators can be strangers or someone they know.
 - Some body parts, e.g. breasts, genitals, etc. are so private that no one else should touch them.
 - They have ownership of their bodies that they have the right to refuse anybody's bad touch or unfriendly request (including those of their parents and relatives).
 - They can refuse by various means such as shaking their heads, saying "NO" firmly, screaming, running away, etc. or seeking help from others immediately.
 - Sexual abuse is an improper act and should not keep it in secret.
- Encourage children to seek help by telling an adult they can trust about the sexual abuse experience or secret touch that bothers them.
 - Even if an adult does not believe him/her, he/she should keep telling other adults whom they trust until someone believes them and help them.
- Do not coerce or encourage children to give hugs or kisses to relatives casually. Let children know the general social distance with others.
- Perpetrators often need not to use physical force to engage a child in sexual activity. They will rather seduce the child to perform sexual acts by taking advantage of the child's trust and dependence on others. Parents should care about their children to ensure their emotional satisfaction and pay attention to their acquaintances in order to prevent perpetrators from taking advantage of them.
- Parents should treat their children's bodies with respect and care so that the children may learn and request others to respect their bodies in a similar manner.
- Communicate with children and encourage them to ask questions or share their experience. Explain to them that they should inform you or other trust-worthy adults if they have been sexually abused.