

Violence and Other Abuse in the Home

What is abuse?

Physical, emotional, mental, verbal or sexual mistreatment. Abuse can take many forms, including violence, neglect, isolation, financial control and threats. It can be directed at a partner (male or female) or a child.



DID YOU KNOW

Abuse happens in all kinds of homes. It occurs in all cultures. It happens in same-sex as well as opposite-sex relationships. And it's carried out by both men and women. **If you are the victim of abuse, it's not your fault.**



DANGER

Shaking a young child, even for a few seconds, can lead to brain damage, blindness or even death.

Never shake your child. Ensure that everyone who cares for him learns to cope calmly with him.

How Does Abuse Affect Children?

Abuse, including violence and neglect, has a strong negative effect on children.

Children may themselves be injured, or they may be affected by hearing fighting, seeing a parent's injuries or being blamed. Even if a child doesn't actually see the abuse, he will feel the tension and fear in the home.

A child may not show he's upset. But violence *does* affect him. He may:

- have behavioural and mental health issues, like aggression, learning problems, depression, anxiety and, later in life, addiction
- not trust his parents to keep him safe, and be fearful of the world
- learn unhealthy ways of solving problems and treating others
- be more likely as an adult to choose an abusive partner or become abusive
- be at greater risk for chronic illness like diabetes and heart disease

What is toxic stress?

The effect of serious, ongoing hardship, abuse or neglect on a child who doesn't have adult support. Toxic stress harms the development of a child's brain and body, and can cause lifelong challenges (see [Brain Development](#)).

What You Can Do

If you're living in an abusive relationship:

- ✓ Keep your wallet, keys and phone easily accessible.
- ✓ Teach your toddler to call 9-1-1.
- ✓ Plan where you'll go if you leave.
- ✓ Tell trusted neighbours to call 9-1-1 if they hear something concerning.
- ✓ Practise getting out of your home safely and quickly.

If you've left an abusive relationship:

- ✓ Keep a recent picture of your toddler and one of your ex-partner.
- ✓ Have the phone numbers and addresses of your ex-partner's family and friends.
- ✓ Know the make, year and licence plate number of your ex-partner's car.

This information will help the police if your ex-partner takes your child.

Getting Help

Help is available if you're living with violence or other abuse.

Contact:

- VictimLinkBC toll-free at 1-800-563-0808 or VictimLinkBC@bc211.ca for confidential help in 110 languages 24 hours a day
- crisis lines
- women's shelters
- child protection social workers
- your health care provider
- the public health nurse
- the police

See Abuse and Neglect in the [Resources](#) chapter for more information.



DID YOU KNOW

If you grew up with abuse as a child, it can affect the decisions you make as an adult. You may be more likely to enter into abusive relationships and find it harder to know what to do. But you *can* build a healthy, safe life. If you need help, contact VictimLinkBC at 1-800-563-0808 or VictimLinkBC@bc211.ca.



EMERGENCY

If you think you're in immediate danger, leave with your toddler and call 9-1-1.



DID YOU KNOW

In Canada, about 100,000 women and children seek shelter from family violence every year.



FAMILY AND FRIENDS What You Can Do

If you think a child is being abused or neglected, you must report it to a child welfare worker. Phone **1-800-663-9122** anytime, day or night. If you think the child is in immediate danger, call **9-1-1**.

Child Sexual Abuse

What is child sexual abuse?

Abuse that may include intercourse, fondling, touching, exposing genitals, inappropriate watching of a naked child or showing pornography to a child. Child sexual abuse is a crime. Normal experimenting between children of the same age is not sexual abuse (see [Sexual Development](#)).

You can help keep your toddler safe by:

- ✓ always knowing where he is
- ✓ only leaving him in the care of people you trust
- ✓ being aware of who's around him when he's in someone else's care
- ✓ encouraging him to tell you if he's not comfortable with someone
- ✓ paying attention when he avoids someone



DID YOU KNOW

Most sexual abuse of children is by someone they know.



TRY THIS

Help your toddler develop personal boundaries by letting him refuse kisses, hugs and tickling. This will teach him the confidence to say no to inappropriate touching.



EMERGENCY

If you believe your child has been sexually abused, contact the police.