



Child Abuse Prevention

New Parents

What can you do to relieve your tension when the baby cries incessantly? There are specific ways to get through this time, and they're important to learn. With extreme frustration, the temptation is to grab and shake the baby—which can result in permanent brain damage.

- Sleep when you can. Priorities at this stage should be feeding yourself, feeding your baby, changing your baby, and sleeping.
- Use self-soothing exercises, such as deep breathing and visualization.
- Arrange for time away from the baby. Hire a sitter, exchange babysitting, or call helpful relatives and trusted friends to babysit.
- When you are alone with baby and cannot comfort her, put her in her crib, make sure she is safe and, without leaving the house, get away from the screaming. Play comforting music or take a shower.
- If you're in a new place or can't reach your helpers and feel you're going to become abusive, call or go to a neighborhood church or synagogue for help.
- Use a slogan to help you get through these times like "Now is not forever." You and your baby will survive and eventually even thrive.

Discipline Your Children Thoughtfully

- Never discipline your child when you are upset. Give yourself time to calm down.
- Remember that discipline is a way to teach your child. Use privileges to encourage good behavior and time-outs to help your child regain control.

Examine Your Behavior

- Abuse is not just physical. Both words and actions can inflict deep, lasting wounds.
- Be a nurturing parent. Use your actions to show children and other adults that conflicts can be settled without hitting or yelling.

Educate Yourself and Others

- Simple support for children and parents can be the best way to prevent child abuse.
- After-school activities, parent education classes, mentoring programs, and respite care are some of the many ways to keep children safe from harm. Be a voice in support of these efforts in your community.

Teach Children Their Rights

- When children are taught they are special and have the right to be safe, they are less likely to think abuse is their fault, and more likely to report an offender.

Support Prevention Programs

- Too often, intervention occurs only after abuse is reported.
- Greater investments are needed in programs that have been proven to stop the abuse before it occurs—such as family counseling and home visits by nurses who provide assistance for newborns and their parents.

Know What Child Abuse Is

- Physical and sexual abuse clearly constitute maltreatment, but so does neglect, or the failure of parents or other caregivers to provide a child with needed food, clothing, and care.
- Children can also be emotionally abused when they are rejected, berated, or continuously isolated.

Know the Signs

- Unexplained injuries aren't the only signs of abuse.
- Fear of a certain adult, difficulty trusting others or making friends, sudden changes in eating or sleeping patterns, inappropriate sexual behavior, poor hygiene, secrecy, and hostility are often signs of family problems and may indicate a child is being neglected or physically, sexually, or emotionally abused.

Report Abuse

- If you witness a child being harmed or see evidence of abuse, or if a child tells you about abuse, make a report to your state's child protective services department or local police.
- When talking to a child about abuse, listen carefully, assure the child that he or she did the right thing by telling an adult, and affirm that he or she is not responsible for what happened.

Invest in Kids

- Encourage leaders in the community to be supportive of children and families. Ask employers to provide family-friendly work environments. Ask your local and national lawmakers to support legislation to better protect our children and to improve their lives.

Suggestions from the Child Welfare League of America