



## **Behavioral and Physical Signs of Possible Sexual Abuse**

### **1. Symptoms of Anxiety**

These include unexplained sleep disturbances (sweats, terrors, nightmares); showing a new or unusual fear of certain people, places, or locations; having unexplained periods of panic or alarm.

### **2. Abnormal Sexual Behaviors or Symptoms**

These behaviors and symptoms include excessive masturbation; leaving 'clues' that appear to intentionally invite discussion of sexual issues; complaining of pain while using the toilet, or exhibiting symptoms of a sexually transmitted disease such as an offensive odor or an unusual rash; resistance to removal of clothing at appropriate times (bath, bed, toilet, diaper change); any symptom indicating evidence of physical trauma to the genital or anal area; engaging in persistent sexual play with friends, toys or pets; initiating sophisticated sexual behaviors, language, or knowledge; asking an unusual amount of questions about human sexuality.

### **3. Changes in Personality or Mood**

Changes include unusually aggressive behavior toward family members, friends, toys, and pets; indicating a sudden reluctance to be alone with a certain person; withdrawing from previously enjoyable activities, like school, or abrupt changes in academic performance.

### **4. General Behavioral Changes**

These can include beginning to wet the bed, experiencing a loss of appetite or other changes in eating habits, including trouble swallowing; developing frequent unexplained health problems; regression to behaviors too young for the stage of development previously achieved; or engaging in self-destructive or self-mutilative behaviors.

### **5. Changes in Beliefs or Discussions**

These changes can include refusal to talk about a secret shared with another adult or older child; discussions about a new, older friend; suddenly things of self or body as dirty, bad or repulsive.