

What to Do if Your Child Has Been Sexually Abused

1. Believe your child. Do not blame your child for what happened.
2. Inform your child they did well to tell and that you are very sorry that this happened.
3. Give your child reassurance and support that they are okay and safe.
4. Tell your child you will do your best to protect them from further molestation. Instruct your child to tell you or a trusted adult immediately if the offender or anyone else attempts sexual molestation again or bothers them in any way.
5. Respond to questions of feelings your child expresses about the molestation with a calm, matter of fact attitude, but do not pressure your child to talk about it.
6. The most common immediate problems of sexually molested children include changes in personality, sleep disturbances, irritability, loss of appetite, bed wetting, fears, acting like a younger child, changes in school behavior or relating to friends, and sexually acting out.
7. Request the privacy of the child by not telling a lot of people or letting other people question her/him.
8. Try to follow regular routine at home (expect usual chores, bedtimes, rules).
9. Inform brothers/sisters that something has happened to the child, but that s/he is safe now and will be okay. Do not discuss details of assault with brothers or sisters. Make sure all children in the family are given enough information to protect themselves from the assailant.
10. Take the time to talk over your feelings privately with someone you trust – your spouse, a friend, a relative, a counselor; express your feelings. Do not discuss the situation repeatedly in front of your child or children.
11. Continue the safety plan set up with you by law enforcement. Do not discuss the investigation with anyone other than the detective and/or victim-witness coordinator.
12. Start counseling for your child right away. Studies have shown your child will improve significantly if your interest in helping your child heal speaks louder than seeking revenge on the offender.
13. Consult with your physician regarding follow-up medical care.