

Signs of Sexual Abuse in Children and Adolescents

childmind.org/article/signs-of-sexual-abuse-in-children-and-adolescents

Kids often won't talk because of shame, so caregivers must be alert



https://youtu.be/6jfJ8QN_YUk

Lauren Book, founder and CEO of [the Lauren's Kids Foundation](#), describes key physical and behavioral signs that might suggest a child or adolescent is being sexually abused. Knowing the signs is incredibly important as children are often ashamed and find it difficult to [talk about abuse](#) — and because getting professional help immediately is a top priority.

Here is what Lauren has to say:

There are many signs that a child may be the victim of childhood sexual abuse, and it depends on the age of that child. So in younger children, you're looking for a failure to thrive. In infants, blood in diapers or unexplained bruises are oftentimes a sign that something may not be right, and as a parent or guardian that's something that you need to look into.

For toddlers and older children, unexplained bruises are again a sign. Interactions with adults: If they at one point in time had no problem going with the coach or Aunt Nancy, but now they're all of a sudden very nervous to do those things, that may be a sign that something's not quite right. Also a lot of those regressive behaviors: If you had a child who was completely potty trained and is now [wetting the bed](#), or having [nightmares](#) or sucking her thumb and that was not an issue before — those are all *signs and symptoms*

that you as an adult may need to check in and see what's going on with your child.

For adolescents, look out for unexplained gifts, money, interactions online. If children startle very easily when you come up from behind them, if they are having trouble walking, or physical pain, those are [signs that something](#) may be up and you should look into it as a grownup who is a care provider for that child.

This article was last reviewed or updated on August 8, 2021.