

What is child physical abuse?

Physical abuse is a non-accidental injury or pattern of injuries to a child or young person caused by a parent, caregiver or any other person. It includes but is not limited to:

- injuries which are caused by excessive discipline
- severe beatings or shakings
- cigarette burns
- attempted strangulation and
- female genital mutilation.

Injuries include:

- bruising
- lacerations or welts
- burns, fractures or dislocation of joints.
- Hitting a child or young person around the head or neck and/or
- using a stick, belt or other object to discipline or
- punishing a child or young person (in a non-trivial way) is a crime.

Generally, child physical abuse refers to the non-accidental use of physical force against a child that results in harm to the child. However, a parent does not have to intend to physically harm their child to have physically abused them (e.g., physical punishment that results in bruising would generally be considered physical abuse).

Depending on the age and the nature of the behaviour, physical force that is likely to cause physical harm to the child may also be considered abusive (e.g., a situation in which a baby is shaken but not injured would still be considered physically abusive).

Physically abusive behaviors include shoving, hitting, slapping, shaking, throwing, punching, kicking biting, burning, strangling and poisoning. The fabrication or induction of an illness by a parent or carer (previously known as Munchausen syndrome by proxy) is also considered physically abusive behaviour (taken from aifs.gov.au)

What is corporal punishment?

Corporal punishment is defined as the use of physical force towards a child for control and/or correction. It is a disciplinary technique applied to the body with the intention of causing some degree of pain or discomfort. Corporal punishment is also known as physical punishment, smacking, spanking, belting or hitting.

How to recognise child physical abuse?

Possible signs in children:

- ✦ bruising to face, head or neck, other bruising and marks which may show the shape of the object that caused it eg. belt buckle, hand print
- ✦ lacerations and welts
- ✦ drowsiness, vomiting, fits or pooling of blood in the eyes, which may suggest head injury
- ✦ adult bite marks and scratches
- ✦ fractures of bones, especially in children under three years old
- ✦ dislocations, sprains, twisting
- ✦ burns and scalds (including cigarette burns)
- ✦ multiple injuries or bruises
- ✦ explanation of injury offered by the child or young person is not consistent with their injury
- ✦ abdominal pain caused by ruptured internal organs, without a history of major trauma
- ✦ swallowing of poisonous substances, alcohol or other harmful drugs
- ✦ general indicators of female genital mutilation eg having a 'special operation'

Possible signs in parents and caregivers:

- ✦ frequent visits with the child or young person in their care to health or other services with unexplained or suspicious injuries, swallowing of non-food substances or with internal complaints
- ✦ explanation of injury offered by the parent is not consistent with the injury

- ✦ family history of violence
- ✦ history of their own maltreatment as a child
- ✦ fears injuring the child or young person in their care
- ✦ uses excessive discipline

Remember, the above are only possible signs of abuse and neglect. The presence of these signs does not necessarily mean abuse has been, or is, occurring.

Your role:

- Discuss child abuse concerns with your Parish Safeguarding Officer or National Safeguarding Officer at the Eparchy.
- Report to relevant child protection agencies in your State and Territory on the number provided below

State and Territory	24 hours Reporting Lines	
New South Wales	Child protection Helpline	Ph: 13 21 11 TTY 1800 212 936
	Mandatory reporters	Ph: 13 36 27
Victoria	Child Protection Crisis Line	Ph: 13 12 78
	North Division Intake	Ph: 1300 664 977
	South Division Intake	Ph: 1300 655 795
	East Division Intake	Ph: 1300 360 391
	West Division Intake Rural and regional only	Ph: 1800 075 599
	West Division Intake metropolitan only	Ph: 1300 664 977
	After hours Child Protection Emergency Service	Ph: 13 12 78
South Australia	Child Abuse Report Line	Ph: 13 14 78
	After hours crisis care	Ph: 13 16 11
Northern Territory	Child Protection Hotline	Ph: 1800 700 250
Western Australia	Child Protection Service	Ph: (08) 9222 2555 Country Free Call 1800 622 258

		Country Free call:1800 199 008
	After hours	Ph: (08) 9223 1111
	mandatory reporter line	Ph: 1800 708 704
Tasmania	Child Abuse Contact number	Ph: 1300 737 639
Australian Capital Territory	Mandatory Reporters	Ph: 1300 556 728
	General Public	Ph: 1300 556 729
Queensland	Child Safety After Hours Service Centre	Ph: 1800 177 135
local intake locations as below:		
Ipswich	Ph: 1800 316 855	
Far North Queensland	Ph: 1300 684 062	Fax: 07 4039 8320
South West	Ph: 1300 683 390	Fax: 07 4616 1796
Brisbane	Ph: 1300 682 254	Fax: 07 3259 8771
South East	Ph: 1300 679 849	Fax: 07 3884 8802
North Coast	Ph: 1300 703 921	Fax: 07 5420 9049
North Queensland	Ph: 1300 706 147	Fax: 07 4799 7273
Central Queensland	Ph: 1300 703 762	Fax: 07 4938 4697

References

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