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It



Shouldn't

Hurt

to be

a Child

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To Grow and Succeed, Your Child Needs to Feel Safe

Many children live in fear that they will be hurt by the adults around them. Many are physically abused by the adults they love. Children deserve to live without hurt and fear. In Idaho, one-third of all the referrals to child protection involve reports of physical abuse.

What is Physical Abuse?

Physical abuse includes any non-accidental injury to a child. Abuse may be suspected if the child's injury cannot be explained or the explanation does not match the injury. Some examples include:

Bleeding

• Burns

• Human Bites

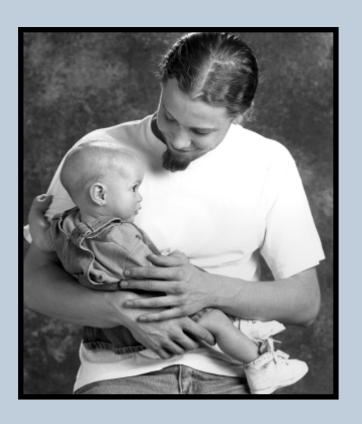
Marks or swelling

• Broken Bones

• Bruises

Pattern of repeated injuries





Is Spanking a Child Considered Abuse?

Parents need to use consistent and effective methods of discipline to help their children learn. Spanking is a very common form of discipline used by parents. Spanking is not considered abuse as long as the spanking does not leave marks or bruises. Spanking or hitting is often not an effective form of discipline and can be damaging to a child's self-esteem. Spanking may also teach a child to physically lash out at others as a means of problem solving. Also, when spanking or hitting is used as a method of discipline, it is possible that the hitting can grow into physical abuse if the frequency and force of the spanking increases.

Shaking a Baby Is Physical Abuse

Shaking can cause the brain to slam against the inside of the skull and bleed. Shaken Baby Syndrome can result in one or more of the following:

- Death
- Seizures
- Permanent, severe brain damage
- Bruising, swelling, and bleeding of the brain
- Mental retardation
- Neck and spine injuries

Tell everyone who cares for your baby that it is never okay to shake a baby or young child. This includes the baby's brothers, sisters, babysitters, child-care providers, other family members, and friends.

Physical Abuse Risk Factors

- Excessive discipline or physical punishment.
- Lack of awareness regarding the force used to strike a child.
- Unrealistic expectations about a child's behaviors and abilities.
- Lack of effective parenting skills.
- Parents' own negative childhood experiences or negative parent role models.
- · Lack of support from friends and family.
- Being under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol.
- Domestic violence.
- Frequent family crises.
- Stress.

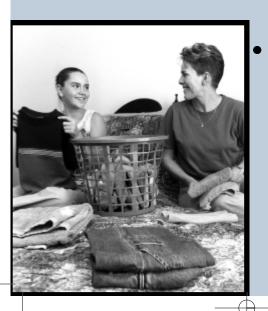


The Link Between Substance Abuse and Physical Abuse

Substance abuse by parents plays a major part in child protection referrals and has been shown to negatively affect the ability of parents to love and care for their child. Substance abuse may shorten the parent's patience, cause the parent to use poor judgement, and react impulsively. Often when under the influence of drugs or alcohol, parents may use excessive force and injure their child(ren).

Witnessing Domestic Violence Affects Children

It is traumatic for a child to see his/her parent in a fight because of the close relationship that is involved. A child who witnesses domestic violence will come to see the world as a scary and dangerous place. It may affect the child's sense of security, self-esteem, and development. Domestic violence increases the risk of a child being hurt or physically abused.



Parenting Tips

- Set rules and be consistent in helping your child keep them.
- Model correct behavior. Show your child the "right way" to behave or do a chore.
- Discipline with short time outs.
- Learn ways to discipline your child without using physical force.
- When anger arises in you or your child, take five minutes to cool down and find a solution.
- Never strike in anger.
- When you can't stop feeling angry or upset, call someone and talk out your frustration.
- Make sure people who watch your child know how to handle their anger safely and appropriately.
- Discuss and approve acceptable discipline with your child's caregiver.

Reporting Child Abuse

Idaho law says that any person who has reason to believe that a child is being abused must report this to their local law enforcement agency or the Department of Health and Welfare within 24 hours. Failure to report suspected abuse is against the law.

For more information on reporting abuse or getting referrals for help as a parent, call your local office of the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare or

Idaho Careline 1-800-926-2588

Costs associated with this publication are available from the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare. IDHW-3000-34753-11/99. Cost per unit \$.35