

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) about Child Abuse Medical Evaluations

### Will a medical evaluation hurt my child?

No. The child's well-being is the first priority in a child sexual abuse medical evaluation, and in most cases, the evaluation will not hurt. In some cases, however, a blood draw may be necessary to ensure that your child is healthy.

### Is a child sexual abuse medical evaluation similar to a woman's pelvic exam?

No. In medical evaluations of young children, the doctor or nurse will only conduct a visual evaluation of the child's genital area, and nothing will be placed inside of the child. For teenage girls, the evaluation may be more similar to a well-woman exam so that the doctor or nurse can thoroughly assess the teenager's health.

### Will the medical evaluation be upsetting for my child?

In most cases, no. Doctors and nurses who conduct child abuse medical evaluations receive special training on how to conduct the evaluation in a child-sensitive manner that minimizes discomfort to the child.



Medical Evaluations  
in Child Abuse Cases:

Information for  
Parents and  
Caregivers





## What is the purpose of a child abuse medical evaluation?

If there is reason to believe that your child may have been sexually abused, a medical evaluation is an important step in making sure that he or she is healthy, both physically and mentally. A doctor or nurse with advanced training in child abuse should examine your child in order to:

- Determine whether your child has any injuries that need to be cared for.
- Answer any questions you or your child have and assure your child that he or she is healthy and that his or her body is normal.
- Screen your child for pregnancy and/or sexually-transmitted infections.
- Determine whether your child might benefit from counseling.

## What happens during the medical evaluation?

Medical evaluations for suspected victims of child sexual abuse can be different depending on what may have happened to your child.

**In most child sexual abuse medical evaluations, the doctor or nurse will usually:**

- Talk to you and your child in order to make you both feel more comfortable.
- Ask questions about your child's medical history and about why your child is receiving a medical evaluation.
- Conduct a head-to-toe physical evaluation of your child to make sure your child is healthy.
- Conduct a visual evaluation of your child's genital area.
- Determine whether your child has any injuries or illnesses that need to be cared for.

**In some cases, the doctor or nurse might need to:**

- Use a forensic evidence collection kit to gather evidence.
- Take photographs of your child's body.
- Draw blood or take swabs of your child's bodily fluids in order to screen for infections.



## What are the benefits of a medical evaluation?

If there is reason to believe that your child may have been sexually abused, there are many reasons why he or she should have a medical evaluation. Some of the benefits are:

- Your child will be seen by a doctor or nurse who can look for and treat any injuries or infections.
- Your child will be able to ask questions and be assured by the doctor or nurse that their body is healthy and normal.
- The doctor or nurse can correct any myths that your child may believe about the abuse.
- You will be able to ask questions about your child's health in order to address any concerns you have.
- By bringing your child in for a medical evaluation, you are showing your child that you support them and want to help them.