



**Fact Sheet 9**

**May, 2007**

**Risk factors and indicators for harm in children 3-5 years\***

This fact sheet contains information that may assist in the formation of a reasonable suspicion of child/student abuse/harm and neglect

**Developmental issues:**

- Mobile therefore able to injure self accidentally
- Able to scavenge for food

**Risk factors in children 3-5 years may include:**

- Developmental delay
- Exposure to multiple forms of child abuse and neglect
- Early onset of disruptive behaviours
- Repeat accidents, injury, poisoning
- Insecure attachment
- Difficult temperament/early onset hyperactivity/disruptive behaviour
- Significant chronic conditions, including disability

**Risk factors in the family may include:**

- Maternal/paternal mental health disorder
- Isolated single carer
- No or limited contact with health system
- Marital conflict associated with instability
- Exposure to family violence
- Deprivation (social and environmental)
- Locational disadvantage
- No or limited contact with neighbourhood/community
- Parental/care criminality
- Parental/carer substance abuse

**Physical harm:**

- Head injury and fractures
  - May present as serious head/eye/brain injury
  - Increased fractures due to own mobility
  - Aetiology less clear

- Fractures of different pattern for child abuse and neglect compared to accidental injury

- Thermal injury
  - May present as gloves burns, cigarette burns, scalds, (NB: able to cause own scalding due to increased mobility).

**Sexual abuse:**

- Presentation behaviours – soiling/wetting, poor sleep, anxiety/fear, behavioural problems, genital injury – anal/vaginal bleeding, penile injury
- Sexualised behaviours)

**Emotional abuse:**

- Withdrawn, poor attachment, aggressive behaviours
- Significant relationship issues between parent/carer and child/family

**Neglect-emotional, physical, medical:**

- Presents with poor hygiene (including oral hygiene), lack of appropriate clothing/equipment, (NB: differentiate from economic disadvantage)
- May present as failure to thrive – inadequate nutrition
- No immunisation
- Factitious illness disorder/Munchausen syndrome by proxy (repeated symptomatology)

(\*This framework is a guide for practice and is not considered to be comprehensive of all harm, behaviours or presentations that may give rise to concern or suspicion of abuse/harm or neglect. Each indicator needs to be considered in the context of the child/young person's circumstances. Further harm/abuse and neglect can occur in the absence of a demonstrable 'risk factor'.)

**Further information:**

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