

# How can I tell if something is wrong?

Children hardly ever tell adults directly if they are being harmed and it is not always easy to recognise when a child needs help. Because of this, child abuse often isn't noticed.

Some signs and behaviours can be clues that a child you know may need your help or some protection. These signs alone do not prove that abuse has happened, but they can act as a 'red flag' to let us know there might be a problem.

Here are some general signs that there may be a problem:

- Crying or being moody or irritable - too much or too often
- Acting out of character
- Being unable to concentrate
- Not being hungry or changes in eating habits
- Keeping to themselves or acting withdrawn
- Being afraid to go home or running away
- Having physical injuries that are hard to explain
- Looking uncared for or always being 'sickly'
- Complaining of pain or irritation in the genital area

## For most children, New Zealand is a wonderful place to grow up...

Some children are not so lucky.

Abuse, neglect and suffering are a fact of life, and sometimes death, for too many of our children.

Since 1994, Child Matters has been working in communities throughout New Zealand, helping adults to keep children safe, through:

- raising the understanding of the issues around child abuse,
- increasing the confidence and skills of those who are in a position to act to protect children, and
- influencing and changing society's attitude so that it will not overlook, ignore or condone violence.

Child Matters speaks up for children.

“ PROTECTING CHILDREN IS  
EVERYBODY'S BUSINESS. ”

For more information or to sign up for our newsletter,  
visit [www.childmatters.org.nz](http://www.childmatters.org.nz)

  
**Child  
Matters CPS**  
EDUCATING TO PREVENT CHILD ABUSE  
STEP UP • STEP OUT • SPEAK UP

## Worried about a child? SPEAK UP...



  
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# Children need you to speak up for them

Whenever a child is hurt or killed there is always someone who says "I was worried about that child but I didn't know what to do." **Don't let that someone be you.**

Children rely on adults to keep them safe.

They need us to recognise when something may be wrong and to help them. Parents play a big part. But just as important are other adults like whanau, family, friends, neighbours, doctors, nurses and teachers.

“ IF YOU ARE WORRIED ABOUT A CHILD,  
TRUST YOUR INSTINCTS, **SPEAK UP.** ”

## 1. STEP UP DO SOMETHING PERSONALLY TO HELP

It can take just one person to make a real difference. By lending a hand or a listening ear at an early stage you may prevent something more serious.

- Learn to recognise the signs
- Provide a listening ear
- Offer help or to babysit for a stressed parent
- Give helpful or supportive information
- Explain that violence is not ok
- Talk it over with an experienced person

You can learn more about how to help at [www.childmatters.org.nz](http://www.childmatters.org.nz)

## 2. STEP OUT LOOK FOR SUPPORT FOR THE FAMILY

It is important that families under stress get extra support when they need it. If you are worried about a family or a child, you can help connect them with support. There are a number of organisations that support children and families, including:

- **Barnardos**  
0800 Barnardos (0800 227 627), [www.barnardos.org.nz](http://www.barnardos.org.nz)
- **Plunket**  
PlunketLine 0800 933 922, [www.plunket.org.nz](http://www.plunket.org.nz)
- **The Salvation Army**  
04 384 5649, [www.salvationarmy.org.nz](http://www.salvationarmy.org.nz)

Or contact your local Citizen's Advice Bureau for other agencies in your area.

To talk over your concerns confidentially you can also call **Child, Youth and Family on 0508 326 459.**

“ SHE JUST SEEMED REALLY STRESSED,  
ALWAYS YELLING AT THE KIDS, **SO I TOOK  
OVER A CUP OF TEA AND ASKED IF  
EVERYTHING WAS OK** ”



## 3. SPEAK UP REPORT YOUR CONCERNS

If you have already tried to help or it is not appropriate for you to help but you are still concerned about the safety of the child, it is important to report your concerns.

To report your concerns call:

- **Child, Youth and Family free on 0508 326 459, or**
- **Contact your local Police station**

Remember, if it's an emergency and you suspect a child is at serious risk, or a crime against a child has been committed this must be reported.

**In an emergency call 111 and ask for Police.**