






Child abuse

Child abuse is common. It is estimated that the prevalence of each of the five forms of child maltreatment in Australia are as follows: physical abuse, 32.0%; sexual abuse, 28.5%; emotional abuse, 30.9%; neglect, 8.9%; and exposure to domestic violence, 39.6%. Child abuse can have lifelong consequences, in particular mental health issues and substance abuse. GPs are often the first port of call for families with children at risk. It is therefore critical that GP registrars be competent in prevention, identification and response to possible child abuse.

TEACHING AND LEARNING AREAS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different types of child abuse • Presentations of child abuse to general practice, including non-accidental injury • Barriers to disclosure of child abuse • Safe ways to ask families about possible child abuse • Red flags for high-risk children • Indications for referral and referral pathways (forensic medicine, social work, hospital, child and family services) • Mandatory reporting obligations relevant to state of practice 				
PRE- SESSION ACTIVITIES 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Chapter 6 of the RACGP White Book Abuse and Violence 				
TEACHING TIPS AND TRAPS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children under the age of 12 months are most at risk • Children with physical injuries may need to be referred to hospital for a comprehensive assessment • It is common for domestic violence and child abuse to co-occur. In these families it may be either the male, female or both who are perpetrating violence towards children • Gender diverse individuals experience higher rates of child maltreatment • Children are impacted by any abuse or violence within the family, even if not directed at them 				
RESOURCES 	<table border="1"> <tr> <td data-bbox="336 1704 432 1827">Read</td><td data-bbox="432 1704 1497 1827"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Australian Child Maltreatment Study: National prevalence and associated health outcomes of child abuse and neglect • The Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne Clinical Guidelines </td></tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="336 1827 432 1917">Watch</td><td data-bbox="432 1827 1497 1917"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RACGP Child abuse and neglect: Response and management in general practice </td></tr> </table>	Read	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Australian Child Maltreatment Study: National prevalence and associated health outcomes of child abuse and neglect • The Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne Clinical Guidelines 	Watch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RACGP Child abuse and neglect: Response and management in general practice
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FOLLOW UP & EXTENSION ACTIVITIES 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Chapter 8 of the White Book – Adult Survivors of Child Abuse • Ask your registrar to reflect on any cases of child abuse that they have been involved with • Discuss any cases of child abuse that you have seen with your registrar 				

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Clinical Reasoning Challenge

You see 4-year-old James with his 32 year old mother Harriet. James presents for an updated asthma plan. On examination of his lungs, you notice a large bruise on his lower thigh that looks like a hand mark. On questioning, Harriet admits that her husband sometimes gets upset with James and on a number of occasions has struck him either with his hand or with his belt as a form of discipline.

QUESTION 1. You are concerned about physical abuse. What are FOUR other types of child abuse that you need to consider at this point?

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____

QUESTION 2. What do you need to do next in this consultation?

QUESTION 3. What else do you specifically need to ask Harriet about?

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ANSWERS

QUESTION 1

You are concerned about physical abuse. What are FOUR other types of child abuse that you need to consider at this point?

- Emotional/psychological abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Neglect
- Exposure to intimate partner violence

QUESTION 2

What do you need to do next in this consultation?

- A thorough examination, explaining what you are doing as you examine. Document all injuries
- Ensure safety
- Consider mandatory notification

QUESTION 3

What else do you specifically need to ask Harriet about?

- Intimate partner violence. It is common for child abuse and domestic violence to co-exist.