

## Trauma

### Behavioral Health Tips

A traumatic event is a frightening, dangerous, or violent event that poses a threat to an individual's life or bodily integrity. Witnessing a traumatic event that threatens life or physical security of a loved one can also be traumatic. This is particularly important for young children as their sense of safety depends on the perceived safety of their attachment figures. Traumatic experiences can initiate strong emotions and physical reactions that can persist long after the event and affect individuals' daily lives. Trauma can occur to children, adolescents and adults of any age and from any walk in life. Types of trauma include but is not limited to neglect of basic needs, physical abuse, sexual abuse, verbal abuse, bullying, sudden or violent loss of a loved one, substance use disorder (personal or familial), witnessing death, witnessing murder, witnessing domestic violence, difficult prior medical treatments, natural disasters, serious accidents, school shooting, family or community violence, and refugee and war experiences.

#### Warning Signs:

Trauma can manifest in many different ways depending in the type, recurrence and the extent of the trauma; and age of the child. Physical signs include sleep disturbances, nightmares, changes in appetite and energy level, bruises or bleeding, heart pounding, vomiting, constant visits to the hospital, unusual illnesses like STD's in a pre-pubescent child, hair loss, or a disheveled/unkept appearance, and/or regression to earlier behaviors (like a fully toilet-trained child soiling their clothes months to years after learning to use the toilet).

Psychological signs include changes in behavior, depressed mood, withdrawal from others, inattention, irritability, aggression, low self-esteem, and/or fear or terror when remembering (or in the presence of) an abuser or traumatic event.

---

### For more information, call

---

#### **Cohen Children's Medical Center**

Pediatric Behavioral Health- Rockville Centre  
100 Merrick Road  
Rockville Centre, NY 11570

**516-927-1630**

Pediatric Behavioral Health- Mineola  
156 First Street  
Mineola, NY 11501

**516-321-5770**

#### How Parents Can Help:

Even though adults work hard to keep children safe, dangerous events still happen. One of the most important things to do when trauma occurs is to validate your child's experience and feelings.

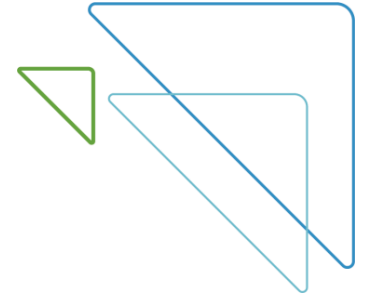
Tell your child you believe what happened and will be there to protect them. Reassure your child that what occurred is not their fault. Love, care, and support from you and other protective people in your child's life will help mitigate the effects of the trauma.

Trauma may or may not lead to long term psychological or physical distress. However, early identification of the trauma and protecting



**Cohen Children's**  
Northwell Health®

# Pediatric Behavioral Health



your child from repeated trauma is paramount to limit the severity of the psychological and physical affects.

Seek help protecting your child as soon as possible if needed (trusted friends or family members, or government agencies can offer protection). Speak to the school if needed (as in bullying at school), seek shelter (or move from the home) if needed if the abuse is at home, and report abuser to the authorities (whether school officials and/or police).

## Treatments:

If needed, children and adolescents may receive therapy, medications, or both. Medications will depend on the symptoms your child develops, and may include medications that help with depression, aggression/irritability, hallucinations, nightmares, or other symptoms that trauma can illicit. Talk to your psychiatrist or medical provider about what medications may help your child and about side effects of the recommended medications.

Therapy includes specific types of therapy known as Trauma Focused CBT (TF-CBT), Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) and psychodynamic trauma-focused psychotherapies. TF-CBT is specifically tailored to change how one thinks about the event and change the harmful thoughts and/or behaviors that result from the trauma; and should be considered first-line treatment.

## Additional Resources:

- 1) The National Child Traumatic Stress Network:  
<https://www.nctsn.org/>
- 2) Overcoming Childhood Trauma by Helen Kennedy
- 3) The Complex PTSD Workbook by Arielle Schwartz
- 4) The Sexual Trauma Workbook for Teen Girls by Raychelle Cassada Lohmann