

# Signs and effects of sexual abuse in young children, in the short, medium, and long terms

Published: 31-05-2013

Last updated: 19-04-2025

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<b>Ethical review</b>	Approved WMO
<b>Status</b>	Recruiting
<b>Health condition type</b>	Other condition
<b>Study type</b>	Observational non invasive

## Summary

### ID

NL-OMON54659

### Source

ToetsingOnline

### Brief title

Signs and effects of sexual abuse in young children

### Condition

- Other condition
- Anxiety disorders and symptoms
- Age related factors

### Synonym

anxiety, developmental problems, relational problems

### Health condition

hechtingstoornis

### Research involving

Human

## Sponsors and support

**Primary sponsor:** Amsterdam UMC

**Source(s) of monetary or material Support:** GGD Amsterdam;UMC Amsterdam;Ministeries VWS en J&V

## Intervention

**Keyword:** sexual abuse, young children

## Outcome measures

### Primary outcome

The primary outcome measures will be posttraumatic stress symptoms, dissociative symptoms, behavioral problems, age-inappropriate sexual behaviors, inappropriate sexual knowledge, and parent-child interactions.

### Secondary outcome

Psychological wellbeing of the parents

## Study description

### Background summary

Little research has been done on the warning signs of sexual abuse in very young children, or on the consequences that such abuse - including the persistence of the abusive pornographic images on the Internet - might have for the children and their parents. Most abuse studies so far have focused on girls, in particular on girls who were sexually abused within their nuclear or extended families. The effects of sexual abuse can be severe, and a variety of risk factors, as well as protective factors, may influence those effects. Sexual abuse may affect the psychosocial, emotional, cognitive, and physical development of children, their relationships with one or both of their parents, and the relations between parents.

In the episode known as the Amsterdam child abuse case, infants and very young children were victimized by a day-care employee. The chief perpetrator was from outside their families, and most of the victims were boys. Research involving

the children and their parents would enable clearer recognition and understanding of the signs of sexual abuse in very young children, the risk factors and protective factors in sexual abuse, and the consequences the abuse might have. This would facilitate early detection of symptoms and prompt therapeutic intervention when child sex abuse is suspected.

## **Study objective**

The purpose of the study is to systematically document the signs and symptoms of sexual abuse in infants and very young children and the short-, medium-, and long-term effects of the abuse, including the effects of the persistence of pornographic Internet images, on the children and their parents. The study will examine the psychological, social, emotional, cognitive, and physical development, and developmental problems, of children; the psychological well-being of their parents; and the quality of interactions between parents and children and between parents. The primary outcome measures will be posttraumatic stress symptoms, dissociative symptoms, age-inappropriate sexual behaviors and knowledge, behavioral problems, and the quality of parent-child interaction. Within the primary study group, we will also assess whether parent and child outcomes in cases of confirmed abuse differ from outcomes in cases of strongly suspected abuse without sufficient legal evidence.

## **Study design**

### **(I): Recognizing sexual abuse in very young children**

The initial assessment (T0) took place shortly after disclosure of the abuse case in December, 2010. In the Academic Medical Centre (AMC), five outpatient teams were appointed, composed of three types of professionals (pediatrician, parent adviser, and child psychologist or child development expert). Each team made systematic diagnoses of the physical and psychological effects of sexual abuse (confirmed or suspected) in children and their parents. A total of 130 children and their parents were examined; in 125 cases, parents authorized the use of anonymized data for research purposes. For 87 of the children, a criminal case file now exists in which sexual abuse has been demonstrated by investigators and/or acknowledged by the chief perpetrator.

### **(II): Longitudinal (cross-sequential) study**

We will conduct a cross-sequential longitudinal study (Bell, 1953; Schaie & Hertzog, 1982; Trickett et al., 2011) involving children who have experienced sexual abuse or for whom there are strong suspicions of abuse (the \*KSM group,\* standing for kinderen die seksueel misbruikt zijn). A cross-sequential longitudinal design will enable us to systematically determine the effects of sexual abuse by combining three research techniques: (1) examining the same children at different ages (longitudinal study); (2) examining children of different ages at the same point in time (cross-sectional study); and (3) examining children of different ages at different points in time

(cross-sequential study).

### (III): Qualitative study

In the qualitative study, parents will be interviewed with a focus on their experiences with the health and social services, the impact of legal procedures and media attention, and the impact of the Internet dissemination of the child pornographic material. To enhance in-depth analysis and explanation of the longitudinal data, we will also form a focus group to obtain feedback on the quantitative outcomes (II). Therapists who treat children and parents involved in the abuse case will also be interviewed about their clinical experiences.

### **Study burden and risks**

Participation in this study does not hold any risks. Questions can be demanding for parents and children. Researchers conducting the interviews are well-trained and have extensive experience in conducting interviews with children and parents.

The time for the measures will be limited to a minimum. There will be only one point of measurement per year.

## **Contacts**

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## **Trial sites**

### **Listed location countries**

Netherlands

## Eligibility criteria

### Age

Adolescents (12-15 years)

Adults (18-64 years)

Children (2-11 years)

### Inclusion criteria

- Children were involved in the Amsterdam sexual abuse case
- Sexual abuse has been proven or there is strong evidence for sexual abuse

### Exclusion criteria

none

## Study design

### Design

**Study type:** Observational non invasive

Masking: Open (masking not used)

Control: Uncontrolled

Primary purpose: Diagnostic

### Recruitment

NL

Recruitment status: Recruiting

Start date (anticipated): 03-06-2013

Enrollment: 150

Type: Actual

## Ethics review

Approved WMO

Date:	31-05-2013
Application type:	First submission
Review commission:	METC Amsterdam UMC
Approved WMO	
Date:	29-07-2013
Application type:	Amendment
Review commission:	METC Amsterdam UMC
Approved WMO	
Date:	29-10-2013
Application type:	Amendment
Review commission:	METC Amsterdam UMC
Approved WMO	
Date:	18-08-2016
Application type:	Amendment
Review commission:	METC Amsterdam UMC
Approved WMO	
Date:	27-09-2019
Application type:	Amendment
Review commission:	METC Amsterdam UMC
Approved WMO	
Date:	07-02-2023
Application type:	Amendment
Review commission:	MEC Academisch Medisch Centrum (Amsterdam)
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## Study registrations

### Followed up by the following (possibly more current) registration

No registrations found.

### Other (possibly less up-to-date) registrations in this register

No registrations found.

### In other registers

Register	ID
CCMO	NL43481.018.13