



# MEDICAL EXAMINATION

The medical examination is completed by a medical provider who has been specially trained in the physical examination of child abuse. The medical examination has two purposes: to ensure the health and safety of your child and to identify any evidence of sexual or physical abuse.

## Making a Referral

Referrals must be made by law enforcement, social services or a medical provider. Appointments will be made for the earliest opening for an interview, medical examination or both. Please be prepared to provide demographic information of the child, caregivers and reported offenders as well as insurance information. Reported offenders are not allowed at the CAC and cannot participate in the medical examination.

## When is a medical examination needed?

Any child or adolescent who discloses abuse may be referred for a medical examination. Regardless of how long ago the abuse occurred, it is important that child and adolescent victims receive a check up to ensure that they are healthy. It is also important that child and adolescent victims attend all follow up medical appointments. Timely examinations are particularly important for sexual abuse that occurred within an acute time frame (*usually less than 96 hours*). In these cases, the medical provider may use a special kit to obtain evidence gathered from the examination, if appropriate.

## How are medical examinations conducted?

Prior to the examination, a staff member will show the patient and family the examination room and will discuss any questions about the process. At this point the patient and family can relay any pertinent information regarding the child's feelings, emotional/mental development, language skills or special needs, and medical history to the medical professional. The medical professional will meet with the child and caregiver to take a careful history and complete a physical examination. Tests may also be conducted to yield additional information or evidence.

The medical provider may use a colposcope during the examination. A colposcope will simply magnify the area to allow for photo documentation of the examination. The child may be referred to another health care provider for treatment for injuries, Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), or other relevant medical problems. The medical provider will discuss the results of the examination with the caregiver and child, and may schedule a follow-up appointment if necessary. Medical examinations usually last an hour to an hour and a half.



# The medical examination ensures the health and safety of your child.

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## How can I prepare my child for the medical examination?

There is really nothing that needs to be done to prepare for the examination. However, if a sexual abuse occurred within an acute time frame (*less than 96 hours*), it is recommended that the child victim does not bathe or brush their teeth until after the medical examination is completed or until further instruction from medical staff or law enforcement. There may be times where the child's clothing will be collected. In addition, parents and caretakers are urged to talk with their children in advance to tell them in general terms what to expect. The child can be told, *"You are going to see a special medical provider to check your whole body to make sure it's healthy. They are going to listen to your heart and lungs and check everywhere there is skin."*

## Can I be with my child during the medical examination?

Caregivers are welcome to be in the room with the child if that is the child's preference. While most children want their caregivers in the room with them during an examination, some children, especially teenagers, prefer privacy. The medical examinations are specifically tailored to the nature of the allegation and sensitive to each child's emotional and physical state.

## What happens after the medical examination?

The medical provider will follow up with the caregiver regarding any findings of the child's medical examination and any recommended follow-up. In addition, the medical provider will communicate the results of the examination to team members as required by the laws of North Dakota.

Staff and team members also review cases on a regular basis to make sure that the team is communicating effectively, sharing information and providing the best possible outcome for the child and family.



## Children's Advocacy Centers in North Dakota partner with these organizations to provide medical examinations and care to children:

- Central Dakota Forensic Nurse Examiners
- Children's CARE Clinic at Sanford Health
- UND Center for Family Medicine

*Children's Advocacy Centers in North Dakota are child-friendly settings that coordinate and provide services for children who may have been abused. The CACs help thousands of people each year using evidence-based practices.*



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