

DURING THE VISIT

What happens when I come to the CAC?

- ◆ After you check in at the front desk, you will meet a nurse who will talk with you to learn about any medical problems or illnesses your child has had in the past. This is a good time to ask questions that you may have. All questions are important.
- ◆ The doctor may ask school-age children about worries or concerns they have about their bodies and if they know why they are here. (This information will help our medical team know what to look for and what tests may be needed to make sure the child is healthy).
- ◆ Then the doctor will do a head-to-toe exam, ending with the private parts. After the exam, the results will be shared with you and any questions or concerns you have will be discussed **without your child present**.

What happens during the medical exam?

- ◆ Your child will receive a thorough check-up that may include looking at their eyes, ears, mouth, listening to their heart and lungs and checking their abdomen.
- ◆ Examination of your child's private parts involves looking at them to make sure they look normal. A special camera called a colposcope is used during the exam. This camera has a light and magnifies the area to allow the doctor to see the child's private parts more closely.
It never touches the child's body, and is never felt by the child.
- ◆ Teenage girls rarely have to have pelvic examinations involving insertion of an instrument called a speculum into the vagina.
Younger girls do not receive a speculum exam at our center.
- ◆ Your child may also be tested for sexually transmitted infections. The test is done by touching your child's throat and/or private parts with small cotton swabs.
- ◆ A blood test may be needed to check for sexually transmitted infections and also for pregnancy in older girls. No blood is drawn at the CAC, but we will assist you in getting any blood tests that may be needed.

May I stay with my child during the exam?

Many children want a parent or supportive adult with them for the exam. Other children prefer to do the exam on their own, with no parent in the room. We will ask the child that is school age or older whom, if anyone, they would like to have with them for the exam. We ask that you respect your child's wishes. Parents will have time to talk to the doctor privately after the exam.

The CAN Council is a non-profit organization that depends on the financial gifts of caring people in our community. Your tax-deductible gift will let us provide a safe, caring place for children to be expertly interviewed and examined lessening the trauma and providing the best opportunity for their safety in the future. This project Case Coordinator/Care Coordinator was supported by Crime Victim Assistance Grant Award CVA#20690-6V03 awarded to the CAN Council Saginaw County by the Michigan Crime Victim Services Commission, Michigan Department of Community Health. The grant award of \$71,902 comes from the Federal Crime Victims Fund, established by the Victims of Crime Act of 1984. The CAN Council provides the required match by the use of 910 volunteer hours valued at \$9,796 and a cash match of \$7,600 from the general fund.

A Medical Visit to the Children's Advocacy Center

A program of the CAN Council Saginaw County



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Together we CAN stop child abuse and neglect

A visit to the CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY CENTER (CAC)

Information for Parents

This is a very difficult time for you and your family. We know you have many questions about what will happen during the visit. At the CAC, our team of professionals is committed to helping families through the medical examination and to making your child's visit as comfortable as possible. Below are answers to questions that are often asked by parents. The information will help you and your child be prepared for the visit.

GENERAL QUESTIONS

Why do children come to the CAC?

The CAC provides medical exams for children when there are concerns about sexual abuse. Children are referred by Children's Protective Services, law enforcement or doctors.

Why is the medical exam important?

The medical exam is done to see if your child has had an injury, infection, or other physical problems that may be related to sexual contact. Most children have no problems and can be reassured that their bodies are healthy. If there are signs of injury or infection, these will be treated and documented.

Who will examine my child?

All exams are done by a doctor who has received special training in the medical examination of sexual abuse, along with a nurse who will assist him during the exam.

Will the exam cause additional trauma to my child?

It is normal for your child to feel nervous about the exam. Our staff takes as much time as your child needs to help them through the exam. We explain each step of the check-up and find ways to put them at ease. These steps help to reduce your child's stress.

Does the exam hurt?

For most children the check-up does not hurt. No shots are given and no blood is drawn at our Center. Your child may feel worried or embarrassed about their check-up. Some children may also report mild discomfort when the doctor or nurse touches near their private parts.

Will the exam show whether or not my child has been sexually abused?

Not all the time, in fact, most children have no signs of injury to their genital or anal areas (private parts). This does not mean that sexual abuse did not happen. **Children can be sexually abused without any injury to their bodies.**

BEFORE THE VISIT

How long will the appointment last?

The medical examination, which includes your child's check-up and talking with you before and after the exam, usually lasts about one hour.

What should I bring to the appointment?

- ◆ **Medical records** of other exams or tests that your child has had of their private parts. These medical records may be helpful information to our staff.
- ◆ **Medical insurance** information, in case any lab tests are ordered. The CAC does not charge families for medical exams. You can be assured that there will be NO out of pocket cost to you.
- ◆ **A supportive adult friend or relative.** These individuals can be supportive and keep children company while parents talk privately with our professional staff.

What should I tell my child about coming to the CAC?

Children are often less worried and more cooperative with exams when they have been prepared ahead of time for what they will be going through. It is important that children have been told about their visit so they will know what to expect and have time to ask questions and talk about their feelings.

Some suggestions:

- ◆ A few days before your appointment explain to your child that they will be coming to the CAC for a check-up. Tell your child that they will talk with a person who will ask questions about their body and their health, and a doctor or nurse will check their body, including their private parts, to make sure their whole body is healthy.
- ◆ Be sure to tell your child that there will be nothing painful like shots, and the people at the CAC will help them the whole time.
- ◆ Children should be encouraged to bring along a stuffed animal, blanket, or any other comforting item that will help them feel more relaxed when they come for their check-up.



Whom should I call if I have questions?

You may call (989) 752-7226, Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and a medical professional or another staff member will be happy to talk with you. Please let us know about any special needs your child has, or if there is information you feel would be helpful to us before you come for your appointment.