

## Facts about Incest

- Incest can and does happen but most people do not like to talk about it.
- 75-80% of incest victims are molested by someone they know, e.g. family members, relatives or close friends.
- Young boys and girls are equally vulnerable to sexual exploitation.
- 95% of all reported offenders are male. Sexual abuse by female perpetrators may be under-reported and may include: inappropriate intimacy, tickling or touching a child's genitals, walking in on children while they are bathing or undressing.
- Incest perpetrators are individuals who are attracted to children and willing to act on that attraction. They are generally not mentally ill or "different"
- Children are very unlikely to make up stories of incest that has not actually happened.
- Children are sensual. Children who are abused sexually learn usually at a very young age that in order to get their needs met they must act provocatively. They begin to equate love with sex. They begin behaving in "sexual" ways to get affection. Their behaviour is labeled seductive by adults.

- Children will most likely have ambivalent feelings toward the offender. They may have enjoyed the extra attention and the offender may have appeared very loving to them. Sometimes the child has been threatened by the offender.
- Some non-offending mothers are aware of the incest but take no action. The reasons for this are complicated. Most of them were emotionally, physically, and/or economically dependent on the offender. Many of them are as controlled by the offender as the victim. A majority of those who do not know of the abuse suffer from shock, disbelief, and sometimes denial. They suffer guilt, self-blame and shame. For all non-offending mothers disclosure means their life is going to be more difficult...they may lose their means of support.
- The damage of incest includes: children being denied their childhood, children being denied a loving and nurturing relationship of trust, children being exploited and betrayed by a person in a position of authority or trust.
- Incest typically goes on for several years prior to discovery. It is not confined to one child but can involve other children in the household.
- Adults often do not talk about incest because of they feel uncomfortable.

*Incest crosses all social-economic, race, and class barriers. It happens in both rural and urban areas.*

# Myths and Facts about Incest



The Crisis Centre  
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## What is Incest?

Incest is a form of sexual abuse which is particularly traumatic because it breaks the trust a child has placed in someone who is normally caring and nurturing.

Incest includes:

- sexual touching or non-touching,
- verbal seduction or abuse,
- anal or vaginal intercourse,
- oral sex,
- sodomy,
- manual stimulation,
- direct threats,
- implied threats,

or other forms of abuse between people who are related by birth, marriage, or by living arrangements, i.e., mother, father, grandfather, grandmother, aunts, uncles, cousins etc and includes half-brother and half-sister.

When any sexual activity takes place between any of the above and a child or young adult, it is incestuous.

The child's age may range from a baby, preschool, school age, teenager and older.

Some of the effects of incest include alcoholism, drug addiction, self-injury, prostitution, promiscuity and sexual dysfunction. Eating or sleeping disorders, headaches, back or stomach pains are just a few of the physical consequences that a victim of incest may suffer. Alcohol and/or drugs, food and sex, deaden painful memories of the abuse and help the victim temporarily forget the abuse.

A number of emotional problems may emerge from the abuse, including inability to trust, perfectionism, phobias, and fear of intimacy.

**If you are, or anyone you know is, being abused, please call the Crisis Centre on 328-0922.**

**We offer free counseling for anyone who is experiencing any form of family violence or abuse**



## Myths about Incest

- Children are usually molested by strangers.
- Incest is a rare occurrence.
- Incest only happens in lower income group homes
- Only young girls are victims of incest.
- Women offend as frequently as men, it just is not reported.
- The offending male is either psychotic or retarded.
- It is only homosexuals who abuse children of their own sex.
- Children lie about incest.
- Children are seductive and provocative and cause the incest.
- The child will always feel negatively toward the offender.
- Non-offending mothers in incestuous families know the incest is going on, even encourage it and/or condone it.
- Sexual abuse is nonviolent and therefore non-damaging.
- Incest is a one or two time occurrence involving a single child.
- Incest is a problem of the family only
- It is better not to talk about incest - the child will forget.