

What is the most common form of childhood sexual abuse in the United States?

Possible answers:

- A. father-son
- B. father-daughter
- C. mother-son
- D. mother-daughter
- E. uncle or close relative-female child

The correct answer is:

B. father-daughter

Incest is defined as the occurrence of sexual relations between close blood relatives. A broader definition describes incest as intercourse between participants who are related to one another by some formal or informal bond of kinship that is culturally regarded as a barrier to sexual relations.

As an example of the latter, sexual relations between stepparents and stepchildren or among step siblings are usually considered incestuous even though no blood relationship exists.

The most common forms of **incest** include **father or stepfather** abusing his daughter or son, mother abusing her daughter or son, uncle or other relative abusing their niece or nephew, or a close friend abusing the daughter or son.

Of the relationships cited previously, the most common relationship involved in sexual abuse is father-daughter. Father-daughter incest accounts for 75% of the total of reported cases.

A few general rules:

A. **Mothers abuse their children more often than fathers.** Roughly two thirds of the perpetrators are women who are responsible for some **75% of neglect** and medical neglect cases. However, **men** were responsible for about **75% of the sexual abuse** cases.

B. **Girls** are abused more often than boys. The overall ratio being about **53%:46%**. However, girls are subjected to **sexual** abuse at almost **twice** the rate as boys. For both sexes some 22% to 23% of the incidents of sexual abuse occurred before the age of 8.

C. Strangers are seldom the perpetrators of the child abuse. Of the abusers, **77%** were a **parent** and another **11%** were a **close relative**.

D. One parent is usually the active perpetrator, while the other parent passively accepts the abuse.

Reference: Swanson's Family Practice Review – A Problem Oriented Approach, Fourth Edition, Alfred F. Tallia, Dennis A. Cardone, David F. Howarth, Kenneth H. Ibsen, 2001.

If you have additional questions or feedback regarding the content of this case, please contact Swanson's Family Practice Review editorial department at:

Elsevier Science-Health Science Division
Attn: Alfred Tallia, MD
c/o Medical Editorial-Family Practice
11830 Westline Industrial Drive
St. Louis, MO 63146

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919-676-7611 NC Coalition Against Sexual Assault
800-222-2000 National Council
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