



*Medical neglect  
can be overcome  
if a family is  
connected to the  
right resources.*

Your donation helps provide  
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Child Abuse Prevention Fund  
MS 3085  
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## Medical neglect

### Overview of medical neglect

Child neglect accounts for more than half of all substantiated cases of child abuse in the United States. Medical neglect is one form of child neglect, and half of all substantiated reports of medical neglect occur in children under 4 years of age. Medical neglect is when a child's parent, guardian or legal custodian neglects, refuses or is unable, for reasons other than poverty, to provide medical or dental care so as to seriously endanger the physical health of the child.

Many times parents or caregivers do not realize that ignoring a physician's recommended treatment for a chronic

childhood illness puts the child at risk of death or worsening of that illness and can be considered medical neglect.

Some medical neglect can be attributed to religious or cultural beliefs. In other cases, parents or caregivers simply do not know what they should be doing to properly care for their children. A parent may have a learning or cognitive disability, or be unable to read. In other suspected cases of medical neglect, investigators discover that the family is having difficulty overcoming certain barriers to care.

### What parents can do

#### Overcoming barriers to care:

- **No insurance** – If your family does not have health insurance your children may be eligible for state-sponsored assistance like Medicaid or BadgerCare. If you do not qualify, many neighborhoods and communities sponsor free medical services either through community health centers or the public health department.
- **Transportation problems** – The Milwaukee County Transit System can meet many families' needs at a very low cost. However, when public transportation is not an option, local churches, family resource centers or community health centers may be able to help with transportation.
- **Scheduling problems** – Not all parents can get time off work during the day to take their children to medical appointments. Luckily, most pediatricians' office offer evening and weekend appointments. Also, Children's Hospital of Wisconsin has several urgent care sites with extended hours, to handle acute illness or injuries.

#### Parents can put the following measures into place to ensure that medical neglect does not occur:

- Find a primary care provider for your child(ren).
- Take your infant or child in for the recommended "well baby" or "well child" check ups. These are vitally important to ensure that infants and children are growing and developing as necessary.
- Immunize your child. It protects your child from illness and also protects others from communicable diseases.
- When your child becomes ill or injured, seek medical care as soon as possible. Simple medical problems can become severe if not attended to in a timely manner.
- If your child is diagnosed with an acute or chronic illness, follow the medical orders prescribed for your child.
- Take your child in for regular dental check-ups as early as age 1. Early care of the teeth and mouth can prevent a future of dental decay and gum disease.