

Medical neglect

Overview of medical neglect

Child neglect happens in more than half of all proven cases of child abuse in the U.S. Medical neglect is one kind of child neglect, and half of all confirmed reports of medical neglect occur in children under 4-years-old.



Many times parents or caregivers do not realize that ignoring a doctor's medical advice puts the child at risk of death or a worse illness.

Ignoring the physician's medical advice can be considered medical neglect. Some medical neglect can happen due 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 disability, be unable to read, or may be facing difficulty in overcoming barriers to care.

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 that it seriously causes danger to the physical health of the child.

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' offices offer evening and weekend appointments. Also, Children's Hospital of Wisconsin has several urgent care sites with extended hours to handle severe illness or injuries.

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

- ♥ Find a primary medical care provider for your child / children.
- ♥ Go to the doctor for "well baby" or "well child" checkups at the recommended time. These checkups are very important so that the doctor can make sure that your child is growing and developing as necessary.
- ♥ Children need to be immunized to protect themselves and others from illness and contagious diseases.
- ♥ When your child becomes ill or injured, get medical care as soon as possible. Simple medical problems can get much worse if they are not taken care of right away.
- ♥ If your child is diagnosed with a serious or ongoing illness, follow the medical orders prescribed for your child.
- ♥ Take your child in for regular dental checkups as early as age one. Early care of the mouth and teeth can prevent future dental problems.

