



SPINA BIFIDA
ASSOCIATION

Risk of Abuse for Women with Spina Bifida

Courtney Shepard Streur, MD, MS

Pediatric Urologist and Health Services Researcher

University of Michigan

coshepar@med.umich.edu

Twitter: [@courtneysmd](https://twitter.com/courtneysmd)

The Statistics

- **Women with physical disabilities:**
 - 4x more likely to be sexually assaulted¹
 - Lifetime prevalence of intimate partner violence 26-90%²
- **People with intellectual disabilities:**
 - 7x more likely to be sexually assaulted³

1. Casteel et al, Injury Prevention 2008.
2. Hughes et al, Rehabil Psychol 2011.
3. Shapiro, NPR 2018.

What about in women with SB?

- Study of 27 females ages 14-23 years:¹
 - 37% reported unwanted sexual attention
 - 30% reported unwanted sexual touching
- Study of 25 females ages 16 and older:²
 - 3 (12%) women described personal experiences of recognized assault
 - 1 (4%) described an unrecognized abusive relationship

1. Sawyer SM and Roberts KV. Dev Med Child Neurol 1999
2. Streur et al. J Sex Med 2019

Women's Stories

So, my brother was the person that did that to me. I was around 5 or 6 and he's four years older than me. So, that happened for a few years...

22 year old female

Women's Stories

I was sexually assaulted, and I thought that was the only form of sexual contact I would get because, when you don't talk to people with disabilities about sex, you give them this feeling like disabled people won't have sex because no one's going to want you, so then you just start to accept the way that anyone treats you, as long as they're looking at you like a sexual being.

29 year old female

Women's Stories

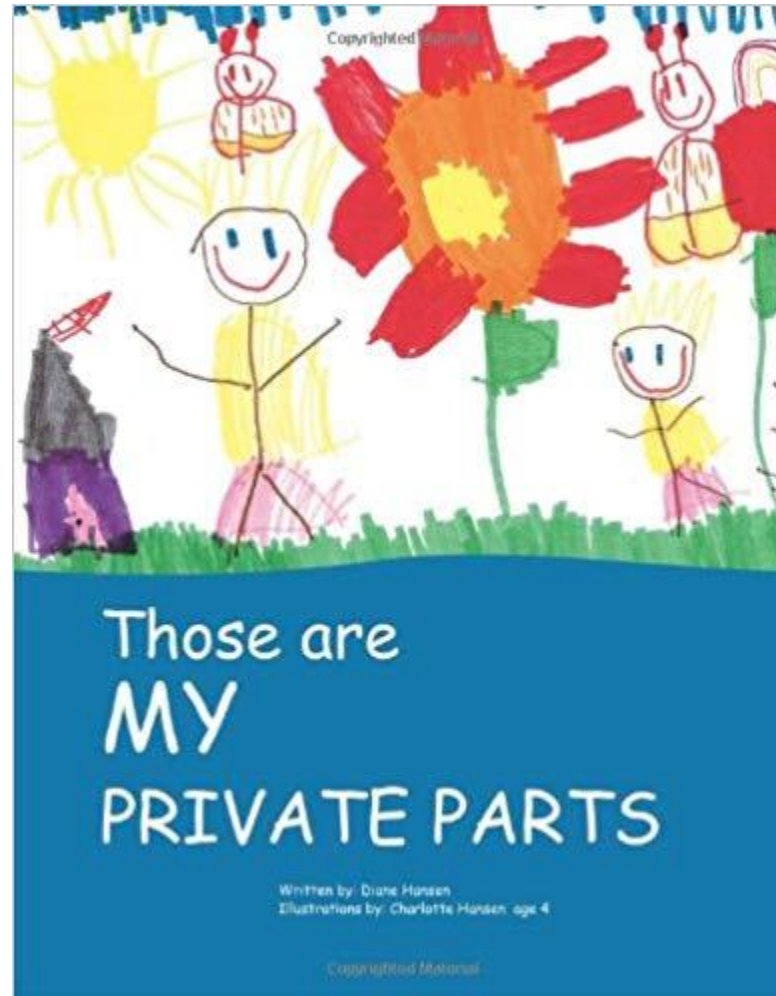
I just felt so alone and I wanted that feeling, I don't think I really wanted sex, I wanted someone to love me.

52 year old female

General Prevention Ideas

- Define “good touch” and “bad touch”
 - “Good touch”: hugging, holding hands, helping with your care
 - Define who YOU can give a “good touch” and who CAN GIVE YOU a “good touch”
 - “Bad touch”: any touch to your private or other parts that make you feel confused, sad, or uncomfortable
 - Even if the touch itself feels good!
- The “swimsuit rule”
 - Your “private parts” are anything covered up by a swimsuit
 - Define who can see and touch private parts

Prevention



Prevention

- Discuss and define supportive and unsupportive relationships
- Online and for-purchase resources explaining sexuality and positive relationships
 - Email me for a list
- Screen for abuse at every visit

Thank you!

Courtney Shepard Streur
coshepar@med.umich.edu
Twitter: @courtneysmd