



Child Trauma

Understanding the Impact



Trauma Events

Combat injury of a loved one

School Violence

Bullying Act of Terrorism

Community Violence

Serious Injury **Abuse** Crime

Accident Discrimination

Violence within the family

Homelessness Loss of a Loved one
Natural Disaster

Economic stress Living or escaping from a war zone


Poverty Cyberbullying

Fires **Racism** Neglect

Serious Illness

Few Facts

- At least 1 in 7 children have experienced child abuse and/or neglect in the past year, and this is likely an underestimate. In 2019, 1,840 children died of abuse and neglect in the United States.
- Each day, more than 1,000 youth are treated in emergency departments for physical assault-related injuries.
- In 2019, about 1 in 5 high school students reported being bullied on school property in the last year.
- 8% of high school students had been in a physical fight on school property one or more times during the 12 months before the survey.
- Each day, about 14 youth die from homicide, and more than 1,300 are treated in emergency departments for violence-related injuries.



What percentage of children have trauma?

- Studies show that about **15% to 43% of girls and 14% to 43% of boys** go through at least one trauma. Of those children and teens who have had a trauma, 3% to 15% of girls and 1% to 6% of boys develop PTSD. Rates of PTSD are higher for certain types of trauma survivors. Mar 23, 2022

Types of Trauma

There are three main types of trauma: Acute, Chronic, or Complex

Acute trauma results from a single incident.

Chronic trauma is repeated and prolonged such as domestic violence or abuse.

Complex trauma is exposure to varied and multiple traumatic events, often of an invasive, interpersonal nature.



Substance
Use
Disorder

PTSD

Other
Stressor
Disorder

Anxiety
Disorder

Trauma
Event(s)

Depressive
Disorder

What Is Child Traumatic Stress?


Children who suffer from child traumatic stress are those who have been exposed to one or more traumas over the course of their lives and develop reactions that persist and affect their daily lives after the events have ended.

The way that traumatic stress manifests will vary from child to child and will depend on the child's age and developmental level.

Without treatment, repeated childhood exposure to traumatic events can affect the brain and nervous system and increase health-risk behaviors (e.g., smoking, eating disorders, substance use, and high-risk activities).



Risk and Protective Factors

- **Severity of the event.** How serious was the event?
 - **Proximity to the event.** Was the child actually at the place where the event occurred?
 - **Caregivers' reactions.** Did the child's family believe that he or she was telling the truth?
 - **Prior history of trauma.** Children continually exposed to traumatic events are more likely to develop traumatic stress reactions.
 - **Family and community factors.** The culture, race, and ethnicity of children, their families, and their communities can be a protective factor...
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Trauma Signs and Symptoms



Eating disturbance.



Sleep disturbances.



Somatic complaints.



Clingy/separation anxiety.



Feeling helpless/passive.



Irritable/difficult to soothe.



Constricted play, exploration, mood.




Repetitive/post-traumatic play.


Impact of Trauma

- Learning problems, including lower grades and more suspensions and expulsions
- Increased use of health and mental health services
- Increase involvement with the child welfare and juvenile justice systems
- Long-term health problems (e.g., diabetes and heart disease)





Childhood Sexual Abuse – What is it?

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- Childhood sexual abuse is considered any "completed or attempted sexual act, sexual contact with, or exploitation of a child."

Types of Abuse

- Exposing a child to sexual activity or sexual content either in person or online
- Incest
- Producing, owning, or distributing child pornography
- Rape
- Sex trafficking or prostitution of a child
- Sexual assault (including intercourse, fondling, masturbation of oneself, or forcing a minor to masturbate)

Impact of Abuse

A person who experiences childhood sexual trauma may have physical injuries and sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

Mentally blocking out memories of past trauma is a psychological defense known as dissociation. Because they are so emotionally painful, recollections of abuse are often buried deep.

Physical Reactions

- Trouble eating
- Difficulty sleeping
- Racing heart
- Severe headache
- Excess smoking/drinking
- Current medical problems worsen

Emotional Troubles

- Nervous, helpless, fearful
- Avoiding people, places
- Anger outbursts
- Blaming yourself
- Negative view of the world
- Distrustful, withdrawn
- Loss of intimacy

Impact

Depression

Post-traumatic stress disorder

Substance use

STIs

Unplanned pregnancy.

Hypersexuality or [sex addiction](#)

[Suicide](#)



**There is
Hope**

How to Heal From Trauma



**Get in touch with
your feelings**



Find help



Self-care



Connect with others

verywell



Psychotherapy

- **For Children**
- [Trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy \(TF-CBT\)](#) is a therapeutic approach specifically for children who are survivors of any type of trauma, including sexual abuse. TF-CBT has been found to be effective in lessening the symptoms of anxiety, depression, and PTSD associated with sexual abuse.¹ It also helps address the child's underlying thoughts and fears related to the trauma.
- [Family therapy](#) may also be recommended in addition to TF-CBT.



Psychotherapy

- **For Children and Adults**
- Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) will also address any negative thoughts or feelings the person has related to the trauma.
- Additional types of therapy that are for both children and adult survivors include prolonged exposure therapy (PET), [cognitive processing therapy \(CPT\)](#), and [eye movement desensitization and reprocessing \(EDMR\)](#).

Medication

- [Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors \(SSRIs\)](#) are a class of antidepressants that may be effective for lessening the symptoms of anxiety that are common in survivors of sexual abuse.¹⁵
- It is more common for adults to be prescribed SSRIs; however, a healthcare provider may prescribe a child SSRIs if they are diagnosed with a co-existing condition such as PTSD. [Anti-anxiety medications](#) may also be prescribed to survivors of sexual assault.



References

- <https://www.nctsn.org/what-is-child-trauma/about-child-trauma#:~:text=What%20Is%20Child%20Traumatic%20Stress%3F>
- <https://www.samhsa.gov/child-trauma/understanding-child-trauma>
- <https://www.verywellmind.com/was-i-sexually-abused-21947>