

FACTS FOR PREVENTION: The Health Impact on Children & Youth

One study suggests that 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 7 boys will be the victim of some type of sexual abuse or assault before the age of 18.¹ With 75 million children in the United States,² this translates to almost 15 million children who will be sexually victimized and abused over the next 18 years.³ The exploitation of children, and its resulting host of negative health outcomes, should be dealt with as a public health concern.⁴

Consider child sexual abuse in a social context:⁵

Child sexual abuse is **1.1** times more common than the rates of teen pregnancy. Three in ten girls in the United States become pregnant by age 20.⁶

Child sexual abuse is **1.7** times more common than childhood obesity, which impacts approximately 9 million children over the age of 6 in the United States.⁷

Child sexual abuse is **28** times more common than mental retardation in children. In 2003-2006, about 7 of 1,000 children were reported to have been diagnosed.⁸

Child sexual abuse is **75** times more common than pediatric cancer. Approximately 10,730 new cases of pediatric cancer are expected to be diagnosed in children under 14 in 2008.⁹

Child sexual abuse is **167** times more common than autism in children, which impacts as many as 12 in every 10,000 children.¹⁰

Adapted with permission from Chris Newlin, National Children's Advocacy Center

"I am well aware that child sexual abuse and exploitation are huge factors in children's health and in the broader public health. A culture that values its children, invests in its children. It's time to invest in prevention of such abuse." Sharon Cooper, M.D.¹¹

Research indicates that:

- The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) study estimates that 25% of females and 16% of males have experienced sexual abuse as children. The same study indicates that sexual abuse has been associated with significant negative short-term and long-term health impacts for the victims.¹²
- Child sexual abuse impacts health care costs across a lifespan. Healthcare costs are 16% higher for women who experienced child sexual abuse and 36% higher if they experienced both sexual and physical abuse.¹³

- Children now spend 45 hours a week with media, 17 hours with their parents, and 30 hours in school. A strong connection has been proven between media exposure and childhood obesity, smoking, and sexual activity.¹⁴
- Media viewing is a critical risk factor for aggression, linking media viewing and physical behavior.¹⁵
- Teens exposed to high levels of televised sexual content were twice as likely to experience a pregnancy during the three-year period, compared to teens with lower levels of exposure.¹⁶
- Childhood sexual abuse can involve a wide number of psychological sequelae, including low self-esteem, anxiety and depression. Numerous studies have noted that child sexual abuse victims are vulnerable to later sexual victimization as well as the link between child sexual abuse and later engagement in high-risk sexual behavior. Survivors of child sexual abuse are more likely to have multiple sex partners, become pregnant as teenagers, and experience sexual assault as adults.¹⁷
- Data from 67,853 women in a Nurses Health Survey II, analyzed in 2009, examined lifetime abuse reported in 2001 with risk of diabetes from 1989-2005. The results showed child or teen physical abuse reported by 54% and sexual abuse by 34% of participants. Moderate to severe physical and sexual abuse in childhood and adolescence have dose-response associations with risk of type 2 diabetes among adult women. This excess risk is partially explained by higher BMI of women with a history of early abuse.¹⁸
- Girls exposed to sexualizing and objectifying media are more likely to develop body image dissatisfaction, eating disorders, depression, low self-esteem and possibly lower academic functioning. The American Psychological Association's Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls noted that consequences of sexualization ranged from mental health issues to negative impact to girls' and women's physical health.¹⁹

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5. **Extrapolated from:** Newlin, Chris. Keynote Address: Putting Child Abuse Into Social Context: How Does it Relate to Other Issues Affecting Children? 9th Current Thinking/New Directions Conference; Hyannis, MA; September 25-26, 2008. Adapted with permission from the National Children's Advocacy Center, 2008.
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