

LONG-TERM CONSEQUENCES OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Child sexual abuse is likely one of the most prevalent health challenges children face, with the most serious array of consequences. Left untreated, it can lead to a long list of mental, physical, and societal illnesses.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Victims of child sexual abuse are more likely to develop substance abuse problems than those who have not been abused.

- Female adult survivors of child sexual abuse are nearly three times more likely to report substance use problems than non-victims.
- Male adult child sexual abuse victims are 2.6 times more likely to report substance use problems than non-victims.

MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health issues are a common long-term consequence of child sexual abuse.

- Adult women who were sexually abused as a child are more than twice as likely to suffer from depression than women who were not sexually abused.
- Adults with a history of child sexual abuse are more than twice as likely to report a suicide attempt.
- Females who are sexually abused are three times more likely to develop psychiatric disorders than females who are not sexually abused.
- Among male survivors, more than 70% seek psychological treatment for issues such as substance abuse, suicidal thoughts, and attempted suicide.

EATING DISORDERS

Studies show that obesity and eating disorders are more common in women who have a history of child sexual abuse than in women who are not abused.

- Women aged 20 to 24 are four times more likely to develop an eating disorder than non-victims.
- Middle-aged women are twice as likely to be obese than non-victims.

PHYSICAL HEALTH

Physical health problems related to child sexual abuse can be minor or life-threatening.

- Adult survivors of child sexual abuse are at greater risk for many health conditions that are potentially psychosomatic in nature: fibromyalgia, chronic headaches, irritable bowel syndrome, and a wide range of reproductive and sexual health complaints.
- Adults with a history of child sexual abuse are 30% more likely than their non-abused peers to have serious medical conditions such as diabetes, cancer, heart problems, stroke, or hypertension.

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PUBLIC HEALTH

Child sexual abuse is a public health problem with enormous consequences for societies as a whole. When the prevalence of child sexual abuse is combined with its economic burden, the results are staggering.

- The CDC estimates the lifetime burden of nonfatal child maltreatment to be over \$200,000 per victim, including immediate costs as well as loss of productivity and increased healthcare costs in adulthood.
- There is evidence that the consequences of child sexual abuse are equal to or greater than the consequences of other forms of child maltreatment.

CRIMINAL BEHAVIOR

Adult survivors of child sexual abuse are more likely to become involved in crime, both as a perpetrator and as a victim.

- Adult survivors are more than twice as likely to be arrested for a property offense than non-victims.
- Child sexual abuse survivors were almost twice as likely to be arrested in adulthood for a violent offense as the general population.



WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

This **does not mean** that the majority of sexually abused children will develop mental or physical illnesses. It does not mean they will become violent offenders or substance abusers. Many will become productive members of their communities, whether or not they choose to report abuse.

These statistics simply show the long-term impact child sexual abuse can have on both victims and communities **Their meaning is clear** - preventing child sexual abuse now can help communities in the future.