

Dating Abuse Fact Sheet



Choose Respect - Physical dating violence among high school students — United States, 2003

Dating abuse is defined as the physical, sexual, or psychological/emotional violence within a dating relationship. Each year, 1 in 11 teens report being a victim of physical dating abuse ([CDC 2006](#)). Many of these cases can be prevented by helping teens develop skills for healthy relationships with others (Foshee et al. 2005).

Dating Abuse Statistics

Teens and adults are often unaware how regularly dating abuse occurs.

- 1 in 11 teens report being a victim of physical dating abuse ([CDC 2006](#)).
- 1 in 4 teens report verbal, physical, emotional, or sexual abuse each year (Foshee et al. 1996; Avery-Leaf et al. 1997).
- 1 in 5 teens report being a victim of emotional abuse (Halpern et al. 2001).
- 1 in 5 high school girls has been physically or sexually abused by a dating partner (Silverman et al. 2001).
- Dating abuse occurs more frequently among black students (13.9%) than among Hispanic (9.3%) or white (7.0%) students ([CDC 2006](#)).
- 72% of eighth and ninth graders reportedly “date” (Foshee et al. 1996); by the time they are in high school, 54% of students report dating abuse among their peers (Jafe et al. 1992).

Teens in Abusive Relationship Are at Risk for Health Problems

Teens and adults often don't make the link between dating abuse and poor health.

- 70% of girls and 52% of boys who are abused report an injury from an abusive relationship. (Foshee 1996).
- 8% of boys and 9% of girls have been to an emergency room for an injury received from a dating partner (Foshee 1996).
- Victims of dating abuse are not only at increased risk for injury, they are also more likely to engage in binge drinking, suicide attempts, physical fights, and currently sexual activity ([CDC 2006](#)).
- Rates of drug, alcohol, and tobacco use are more than twice as high in girls who report physical or sexual dating abuse than in girls who report no abuse (Plichta 1996).
- Dating abuse is associated with unhealthy sexual behaviors that can lead to unintended pregnancy, sexually-transmitted diseases, and HIV infections (Silverman et al. 2001).
- Abusive dating experiences during adolescence may disrupt normal development of self-esteem and body image (Ackard and Neumark-Sztainer 2002).
- Teens in abusive relationships often carry these unhealthy patterns of abuse into future relationships (Smith et al. 2003).

Choosing Respect: Developing Healthy Relationships to Prevent Dating Abuse

Dating abuse can be prevented. Teen years have been characterized as a “window of opportunity” - a time for teens to prepare for future relationships by learning healthy relationship skills such as negotiation, compromise, and conflict resolution (Wolfe and Wekerle 1997). That's why adults need to talk to teens now about the importance of choosing respect and developing healthy relationships.

- Several studies suggest that teens do not see the negative consequences of dating abuse and violence in their friends' lives (Hotelling and Sugarman 1986). 31% of teens report having at least one friend who is in a violent relationship (Arriaga and Foshee 2004).
- Acceptance of dating abuse among friends is one of the strongest links to future involvement in dating abuse (Bergman 1992; Arriaga and Foshee 2004).
- Teens often believe that unhealthy relationships are the norm. Many relationships seen on TV, in the movies, and in magazines are unrealistic or unhealthy examples of relationships.
- Qualities like respect, good communication and honesty are absolute requirements for a healthy relationship. Teens that do not have this part down before they begin to date may have trouble forming healthy, nonviolent relationships with others (Wekerle and Wolfe 1999; Feiring and Furman 2000).
- Choose Respect is a nationwide effort to prevent dating abuse before it starts. It encourages adolescents to form healthy relationships with others – before they even start to date.

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