

Long-Term Consequences of Child Abuse and Neglect

The impact of child abuse and neglect is far greater than its immediate, visible effects. These experiences can shape child development and have consequences that last years, even lifetimes. Research now shows that the physical, psychological, and behavioral consequences of child abuse and neglect impact not just the child and family, but the community as a whole.

Physical Consequences

The immediate physical effects of abuse can range from relatively minor, such as a bruise or cut, to severe, such as broken bones, internal bleeding, or even death. Longer-term consequences may include:

- ☆ Shaken Baby Syndrome (including blindness, learning disabilities, mental retardation, cerebral palsy, or paralysis)
- ☆ Impaired brain development
- ☆ Lifelong poor physical health

Psychological Consequences

The immediate psychological effects of abuse and neglect— isolation, fear, and a lack of trust—can spiral into long-term mental health consequences including:

- ☆ Depression and anxiety
- ☆ Low self-esteem
- ☆ Difficulty establishing and maintaining relationships
- ☆ Eating disorders
- ☆ Suicide attempts

Behavioral Consequences

Studies have found abused or neglected children to be at least 25 percent more likely to experience problems in adolescence, including:

- ☆ Delinquency
- ☆ Teen pregnancy
- ☆ Drug use
- ☆ Low academic achievement

As adults, children who experienced abuse or neglect have an increased likelihood of criminal behavior, involvement in violent crime, abuse of alcohol and other drugs, and abusive behavior.

For more information, read *Long-Term Consequences of Child Abuse and Neglect*, from the National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information, available at http://nccanch.acf.hhs.gov/pubs/factsheets/long_term_consequences.cfm.

