

**Conclusive correlation between childhood trauma and adult health outcomes**

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The Adverse Childhood Experiences study[[1]](#endnote-1) was conducted with 17,000 health clients at one large health provider, Kaiser Permanente, in the USA. In the mid-1990s, these people were all given a physical examination and completed a questionnaire about their childhood. The study has continued to follow them up, ever since.

The study recorded experiences of trauma, which they termed Adverse Childhood Experiences, or ACE. These included:

* all forms of child abuse and neglect
* physical violence (only) towards their mother or stepmother
* separation or divorce

and growing up with anyone in the household:

* abusing alcohol or drugs
* with mental health issues
* going to prison

They found that 63% of participants had experienced at least one category of childhood trauma and over 20% had experienced 3 or more.

They found that as the number of ACEs increases, so the number of adverse health issues goes up, including:

* Adolescent pregnancy
* Alcoholism and alcohol abuse
* Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)
* Depression
* Early initiation of smoking
* Early initiation of sexual activity
* Fetal death
* Health-related quality of life
* Illicit drug use
* Ischemic heart disease (IHD)
* Liver disease
* Risk for intimate partner violence
* Multiple sexual partners
* Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)
* Smoking
* Suicide attempts
* Unintended pregnancies

Now I don’t want to go alarming any of you who suffered trauma as a child. I am highlighting this to try to demonstrate the importance of us, the professionals, and the Government at a much broader level, recognising the need to protect children from trauma and to provide viable opportunities for recovery from its effects. A huge step towards that is the recognition of the impact on, and cost to, individuals, families and society if we don’t.

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1. <http://www.cdc.gov/ace/index.htm> [↑](#endnote-ref-1)