

children's health

Bullied Children Develop Psychotic Symptoms

Childhood Bullying May Trigger Mental Problems in Adolescence

By Jennifer Warner
WebMD Health News

Reviewed by Louise Chang, MD

May 4, 2009 -- Children who are constantly bullied may be more likely to develop psychotic symptoms like hallucinations or delusions years later as adolescents.

A new study shows that children who were consistently victimized by their peers at ages 8 or 10 were twice as likely to have psychotic symptoms by the time they hit adolescence. That risk was even greater if the bullying was particularly chronic or severe.

Researcher Andrea Schreier, PhD, of Warwick Medical School at the University of Warwick in England, and colleagues say the results highlight the consequences of childhood bullying and why it should not be tolerated.

The findings also support previous research that suggests childhood bullying may increase the risk of mental disorders in adults who are victimized as children.

Bullied Children at Risk

The study, published in the *Archives of General Psychiatry*, followed more than 6,400 children in Bristol, England, who were evaluated annually from ages 7 to about 13.

The children, their parents, and teachers reported whether the child had been bullied by peers. (Bullying was defined as negative actions by one or more students with the intention to hurt.) At each annual visit, interviewers also rated the children on whether they experienced psychotic symptoms, such as hallucinations, delusions, or thought disorders during the previous six months.

The results showed that 46% of children were bullied at either age 8 or 10. By about age 13, 5.6% of the children had one or more psychotic symptoms definitely present and 11.5%-13.7% of the children had one or more psychotic symptoms suspected or definitely present.

Bullied children were approximately twice as likely to have psychotic symptoms in adolescence, regardless of other risk factors, such as other mental illnesses, family circumstances, or the child's IQ. The risk of psychotic symptoms was stronger when the childhood bullying was chronic or severe.

Researchers say more study is needed to understand the link between childhood bullying and psychotic symptoms.

The authors note that possible explanations may be that the chronic [stress](#) of childhood bullying stimulates a genetic predisposition to [schizophrenia](#) to trigger psychotic symptoms. Or chronic childhood bullying may also alter how the brain processes and responds to stress.

parenting and children's health newsletter

Vaccinations, developmental milestones, healthy eating. Keep your little ones safe and strong. Sign up for WebMD's Parenting and Children's Health newsletter.

Enter Email Address

SUBMIT

View Article Sources

© 2009 WebMD, LLC. All rights reserved.

SHARE
What is this?

Digg

 del.icio.us

More...

©2005-2007 WebMD, Inc. All rights reserved.
WebMD does not provide medical advice, diagnosis or treatment.

My Notes:

WebMD
pill identifier

Know What Your Kids Are Into
Before It Gets Into Your Kids.



CHECK NOW