

Violence Prevention



Fast Facts: Preventing Teen Dating Violence

What is teen dating violence?

Teen dating violence (TDV), also called, “dating violence”, is an [adverse childhood experience](#) that affects millions of young people in the United States. Dating violence can take place in person, online, or through technology. It is a type of [intimate partner violence](#) that can include the following types of behavior:



- **Physical violence** is when a person hurts or tries to hurt a partner by hitting, kicking, or using another type of physical force.
- **Sexual violence** is forcing or attempting to force a partner to take part in a sex act and or sexual touching when the partner does not consent or is unable to consent or refuse. It also includes non-physical sexual behaviors like posting or sharing sexual pictures of a partner without their consent or sexting someone without their consent.
- **Psychological aggression** is the use of verbal and non-verbal communication with the intent to harm a partner mentally or emotionally and exert control over a partner.
- **Stalking** is a pattern of repeated, unwanted attention and contact by a current or former partner that causes fear or safety concern for an individual victim or someone close to the victim.

Teen dating violence profoundly impacts lifelong health, opportunity, and wellbeing. Unhealthy relationships can start early and last a lifetime. The good news is violence is preventable, and we can all help young people grow up violence-free.

How big is the problem?

Teens often think some behaviors, like teasing and name-calling, are a “normal” part of a relationship. However, these behaviors can become abusive and develop into serious forms of violence. Many teens do not report unhealthy behaviors because they are afraid to tell family and friends.

Teen dating violence is common. Data from CDC’s Youth Risk Behavior Survey in 2019 indicate that among U.S. high school students who reported dating during the 12 months before the survey:

- About 1 in 12 experienced physical dating violence.
- About 1 in 12 experienced sexual dating violence.

Some teens are at greater risk than others. Female students experienced higher rates of physical and sexual dating violence than male students. Students who identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer (LGBTQ) or those who were unsure of their gender identity experienced higher rates of physical and sexual dating violence compared to students who identified as heterosexual.

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What are the consequences?

Unhealthy, abusive, or violent relationships can have short-and long-term negative effects, including severe consequences, on a developing teen. Youth who are victims of teen dating violence are more likely to:


- experience depression and anxiety symptoms
- engage in unhealthy behaviors, like using tobacco, drugs, and alcohol
- exhibit antisocial behaviors, like lying, theft, bullying, or hitting
- think about suicide

Violence in an adolescent relationship sets the stage for future relationship problems, including intimate partner violence and sexual violence perpetration and/or victimization throughout life. For example, youth who are victims of dating violence in high school are at higher risk for victimization during college.

How can we prevent teen dating violence?

Supporting healthy, nonviolent relationships could reduce TDV and prevent its harmful, long-lasting effects on individuals, their families, and their communities. During the pre-teen and teen years, it is critical for youth to begin learning skills to create and maintain healthy relationships, including managing feelings and communicating in a healthy way. Research also highlights the need for prevention efforts that address the unique needs of teens who are at greater risk of experiencing teen dating violence.

CDC has developed resources to help communities focus their prevention efforts on what works to address risk and protective factors for violence:

- [Dating Matters®: Strategies to Promote Healthy Teen Relationships](#) is a comprehensive prevention model that teaches 11-14-year-olds how to have healthy, safe relationships both now and in the future. Programs for youth include interactive lessons on understanding feelings, healthy communication, unhealthy and unsafe relationships, and other topics. Dating Matters also includes programs for parents, educators, and older youth to help build protective environments and change social norms. Research shows that Dating Matters can reduce the risk for dating violence exposure in middle school, along with other forms of violence and risk behaviors.
- [Intimate Partner Violence Prevention Resource for Action](#)  [5 MB, 62 Pages] describes strategies and approaches based on the best available evidence for preventing intimate partner violence, including teen dating violence. It includes multiple strategies that can be used in combination to prevent intimate partner violence and teen dating violence.



Teach safe and healthy relationship skills

- Social-emotional learning programs for youth
- Healthy relationship programs for couples

Engage Influential adults and peers

- Men and boys as allies in prevention
- Bystander empowerment and education
- Family-based programs

Disrupt the developmental pathways toward partner violence

- Early childhood home visitation
- Preschool enrichment with family engagement
- Parenting skill and family relationship programs
- Treatment for at-risk children, youth, and families

Create protective environments

- Improve school climate and safety
- Improve organizational policies and workplace climate
- Modify the physical and social environments of neighborhoods

Strengthen economic supports for families

- Strengthen household financial security
- Strengthen work-family supports

Support survivors to increase safety and lessen harms

- Victim-centered services
- First responder and civil legal protections
- Treatment and support for survivors of IPV, including teen dating violence
- Housing programs
- Patient-centered approaches

See [Intimate Partner Violence Resources](#) for articles, publications, data sources, and prevention resources for Teen Dating Violence.

References

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