

Preventing Teen Dating Violence

What is teen dating violence?

Teen dating violence, 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:¹

- **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 or cannot consent. 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/or exert control over a partner.
- **Stalking** is a pattern of repeated, unwanted attention and contact by a partner that causes fear or concern for one’s own safety or the safety of someone close to the victim.

Teen dating violence has profound impact on lifelong health, opportunity, and well-being. 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, but 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 and the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey indicate that:

- Nearly 1 in 11 female teens and about 1 in 14 male high school students report having experienced physical dating violence in the last year.²
- About 1 in 8 female and 1 in 26 male high school students report having experienced sexual dating violence in the last year.²
- 26% of women and 15% of men who were victims of contact sexual violence, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner in their lifetime first experienced these or other forms of violence by that partner before age 18.³

Some teens are at greater risk than others. Sexual minority groups are disproportionately affected by all forms of violence, and some racial/ethnic minority groups are disproportionately affected by many types of violence.



What are the consequences?

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

- Experience symptoms of depression and anxiety
- Engage in unhealthy behaviors, like using tobacco, drugs, and alcohol
- Exhibit antisocial behaviors, like lying, theft, bullying or hitting
- Think about suicide^{4,5,6}.

Violence in an adolescent relationship sets the stage for problems in future relationships, 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.⁷

How can we stop teen dating violence before it starts?

Supporting the development of healthy, respectful, and nonviolent relationships has the potential to reduce the occurrence of teen dating violence and prevent its harmful and long-lasting effects on individuals, their families, and the communities where they live. During the pre-teen and teen years, it is critical for youth to begin learning the skills needed to create and maintain healthy relationships. These skills include knowing how to manage feelings and how to communicate in a healthy way.

CDC developed *Dating Matters®: Strategies to Promote Healthy Teen Relationships* to stop teen dating violence before it starts. It focuses on 11-14-year-olds and includes multiple prevention components for individuals, peers, families, schools, and neighborhoods. All of the components work together to reinforce healthy relationship messages and reduce behaviors that increase the risk of dating violence. Please visit the Dating Matters website to learn more! www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/datingmatters

CDC also developed a resource that describes a variety of strategies and approaches that are based on the best available evidence for preventing intimate partner violence, including teen dating violence.⁸ The resource includes multiple strategies that can be used in combination to stop intimate partner violence and teen dating violence before it starts.



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



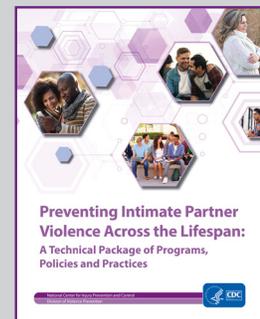
Support survivors to increase safety and lessen harms

- 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

Preventing Intimate Partner Violence Across the Lifespan:

A Technical Package of Programs, Policies, and Practices

A **technical package** is a collection of strategies based on the best available evidence to prevent or reduce public health problems. The **strategy** lays out the direction and actions to prevent intimate partner violence. The **approach** includes the specific ways to advance the strategy through programs, policies and practices. The **evidence** to support the approaches for preventing intimate partner violence and associated risk factors is also included.



References

1. Breiding MJ, Basile KC, Smith SG, Black MC, Mahendra RR. (2015). Intimate partner violence surveillance: uniform definitions and recommended data elements, version 2.0. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
2. Basile KC, Clayton HB, DeGue S, Gilford JW, Vagi KJ, Suarez NA, ... & Lowry R. (2020). Interpersonal Violence Victimization Among High School Students—Youth Risk Behavior Survey, United States, 2019. *MMWR supplements*, 69(1), 28.
3. Smith, SG, S. G., Zhang, X., Basile, KC, K.C., Merrick, MT, M.T., Wang, J., Kresnow, M., Chen, J. (2018). The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS): 2015 Data Brief—Updated Release. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
4. Foshee VA, McNaughton Reyes HL, Gottfredson NC, Chang LY, Ennett ST. (2013). A longitudinal examination of psychological, behavioral, academic, and relationship consequences of dating abuse victimization among a primarily rural sample of adolescents. *Journal of Adolescent Health*; 53(6):723-729.
5. Roberts TA, Klein JD, Fisher S. (2003). Longitudinal effect of intimate partner abuse on high-risk behavior among adolescents. *Archives of Pediatric Adolescent Medicine*; 157(9):875-881.
6. Exner-Cortens D, Eckenrode J, Rothman E. (2003). Longitudinal associations between teen dating violence victimization and adverse health outcomes. *Pediatrics*; 131(1):71-78.
7. Smith PH, White JW, Holland LJ. (2003). A longitudinal perspective on dating violence among adolescent and college-age women. *American Journal of Public Health*; 93(7):1104-1109.
8. Niolon PH, Kearns M, Dills J, Rambo K, Irving S, Armstead T, Gilbert L. (2017). Preventing Intimate Partner Violence Across the Lifespan: A Technical Package of Programs, Policies and Practices. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.