

## Years after bullying, negative impact on a child's health may remain

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The longer the period of time a child is bullied, the more severe and lasting the impact on a child's health, according to a new study from Boston Children's Hospital published online Feb. 17 in *Pediatrics*. The study is the first to examine the compounding effects of bullying from elementary school to high school.

"Our research shows that long-term [bullying](#) has a severe impact on a child's overall [health](#), and that its negative effects can accumulate and get worse with time," says the study's first author Laura Bogart, PhD, from Boston Children's Division of General Pediatrics. "It reinforces the notion that more bullying intervention is needed, because the sooner we stop a child from being bullied, the less likely bullying is to have a lasting, damaging effect on his or her health down the road."

Bogart and the team collected data for the study by following a group of 4,297 children and adolescents from fifth to tenth grade. The researchers periodically interviewed them about their mental and physical health and their experience(s) with bullying.

The researchers found that bullying at any age was associated with worse mental and [physical health](#), increased depressive symptoms and lower self-worth. Participants who experienced chronic bullying also reported increased difficulties in physical activities like walking, running or participating in sports. Those who experienced bullying in the past and were also experiencing bullying in the present showed the lowest health scores.

According to the authors, the study reinforces the importance of early intervention to stop bullying and to be aware of the need to intervene again, even if the bullying is not ongoing, to address the persistent effects. Bogart and colleagues are calling for increased research to better develop and clinically test bullying prevention and intervention methods.

"There's no such thing as a one-size-fits-all approach when it comes to addressing bullying," Bogart says. "But providing teachers, parents and clinicians with best-practices that are evidence-based could better assist those at the frontlines helping children cope with this serious problem and lessen the damage it causes."

Provided by Children's Hospital Boston

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