

How to raise a child who doesn't bully

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With all of the media attention on young people being tormented by bullies and cyberbullies, parents may wonder what they can do to protect their children. The question they may want to ask instead is how can they prevent their child from becoming a bully.

New research to be presented on Sunday, May 1, at the Pediatric Academic Societies (PAS) annual meeting in Denver shows that parents can play a key role in decreasing the chances that their son or daughter will harass or intimidate other children.

Researchers, led by Rashmi Shetgiri, MD, FAAP, examined the prevalence of bullying reported by parents who took part in the National Survey of Children's Health from 2003-2007. They also looked at factors that were associated with an increased or decreased risk that a child bullied others.

The survey showed nearly one in six youths 10-17 years old bullied others frequently in 2007, according to Dr. Shetgiri, assistant professor of [pediatrics](#) at University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center and Children's Medical Center, Dallas. While the rates of parents who reported that their children harassed others frequently (defined as sometimes, usually or always) decreased from 2003 to 2007, these rates remain high, Dr. Shetgiri said.

Survey results also showed that 23 percent of children had bullied another youngster in 2003 compared to 35 percent in 2007.

Some factors that increase the likelihood that a child will bully others have persisted from 2003 to 2007. For example, children are more likely to be bullies if their parents frequently feel angry with them or feel their child bothers them a lot. In addition, children with an emotional, developmental or behavioral problem and those whose mothers report less than very good mental health also are more likely to be bullies. In fact, about one in five [bullies](#) has an emotional, developmental or

behavioral problem, more than three times the rate in non-bullies, Dr. Shetgiri noted.

Other factors that seem to protect a child from becoming a bully also have persisted from 2003 to 2007. Parents who share ideas and talk with their child, and who have met most or all of their child's friends are less likely to have children who [bully](#), Dr. Shetgiri said.

"Targeting interventions to decrease these persistent risk factors and increase the persistent protective factors could lead to decreased bullying," she said.

For example, [parents](#) can increase involvement with their children by meeting their friends and by spending time talking and sharing ideas with their [children](#), Dr. Shetgiri suggested. "They also can find effective ways to manage any feelings of anger toward their child and can work with health care providers to make sure any emotional or behavioral concerns they have about their child, as well as their own mental health, are addressed."

More information: To view the abstract, go to www.abstracts2view.com/pas/view.php?nu=PAS11L1_965

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