



The National Children's Advocacy Center

Adverse Experiences in Childhood (ACE Study)

Overview by Chris Newlin

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Adverse Childhood Experiences Study

- 14-year-old study involves 17,337 adults who became members of Kaiser Permanente, a health care maintenance organization in San Diego, between 1995 and 1997.
- After visiting a primary care facility, they voluntarily filled out a standard medical questionnaire that included questions about their childhood.
- The questionnaire asked them about 10 types of child trauma:
 - Three types of abuse (sexual, physical and emotional).
 - Two types of neglect (physical and emotional).
 - Five types of family dysfunction (having a mother who was treated violently, a household member who's an alcoholic or drug user, who's been imprisoned, or diagnosed with mental illness, or parents who are separated or divorced).

Adverse Childhood Experiences Study

- More than 50 research papers published since 1998
- **Adverse childhood experiences are common** – 64% of the study participants had experienced one or more categories of adverse childhood experiences.
- **Strong link between adverse childhood experiences and adult onset of chronic illness** - those with ACE scores of 4 or more had significantly higher rates of heart disease and diabetes than those with ACE scores of zero.
 - *chronic pulmonary lung disease increased 390%*
 - *hepatitis increased 240%*
 - *depression increased 460%*
 - *suicide increased 1,220%*



Adverse Childhood Experiences Study

- **Multiple ACEs connected to early death** - people with six or more ACEs died nearly 20 years earlier on average than those without ACEs
 - *60.6 years vs. 79.1 years*
- **Child maltreatment has long-term impacts** - those who had experienced child maltreatment were more likely to engage in risky health-related behaviors during childhood and adolescence:
 - *early initiation of smoking*
 - *sexual activity*
 - *illicit drug use*
 - *adolescent pregnancies*
 - *suicide attempts*

Reference

Felitti, V. J., & Anda, R. F. (1997.) The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved from <http://www.cdc.gov/ace/index.htm>

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