

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE)

What is the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study?

Adverse childhood experiences (ACE) are stressful or traumatic experiences, including abuse, neglect, and problems in the home such as witnessing domestic violence, or growing up with substance abuse, mental illness, or crime in the home. The first phase of the ACE Study was conducted from 1995 to 1997 and had more than 17,000 participants. The study consisted of a standardized physical examination and a confidential survey that contained questions about any childhood mistreatment and family life.

What did the ACE Study find?

Childhood abuse, neglect, and exposure to other traumatic stressors (adverse childhood experiences) are common. Almost two-thirds of the study participants reported at least 1 adverse childhood experience, and more than one in five reported 3 or more adverse childhood experiences. The short- and long-term effects of these childhood exposures include many health and social problems.

The study found that as the number of adverse childhood experiences increased the likelihood of developing the following health problems increases:

- Alcoholism and alcohol abuse
- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)
- Depression
- Fetal death
- Health-related quality of life
- Illicit drug use
- Ischemic heart disease (IHD)
- Liver disease
- Risk for intimate partner violence
- Multiple sexual partners
- Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)
- Smoking
- Suicide attempts
- Unintended pregnancies
- Early initiation of smoking
- Early initiation of sexual activity
- Adolescent pregnancy

The ACE Study uncovered how adverse childhood experiences are strongly related to development and frequency of risk factors for disease & health and social well-being throughout a person's life. The following image identifies how a child's life can unfold and where points of intervention are most needed (Scientific Gaps).

Additional Information about the ACE Study

To find further information about the ACE Study, its findings, its publications, and its current phase please use the link below.

<http://www.cdc.gov/ace/index.htm>