

Wellness Articles

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If you would like to be added to the distribution list for these articles, please email: Rebecca.johnson2@albertahealthservices.ca. You will receive a monthly email containing articles for the upcoming four weeks.

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Help put an end to bullying

Bullying is acting in ways that scare or harm another person. Bullying can be a one-time event, but more often occurs over time. Bullying usually starts in elementary school, becomes most common in middle school, and is less common by high school.

Bullying can take many forms, including:

- Physical harm, such as hitting, shoving, or tripping.
- Emotional harm, such as making fun of the way a person acts, looks, or talks. Writing mean things about someone in emails or online journals (blogs) is also bullying.

Girls who bully are more likely to do so in emotional ways. Boys who bully often do so in both physical and emotional ways. For example:

- A girl may form a group and exclude another girl or gossip about her.
- A boy may shove another boy and call him names.

Both boys and girls take part in "cyberbullying." This means using high-tech devices to spread rumours or to send hurtful messages or pictures. The damaging effects of emotional bullying is real.

If you think your child is being bullied or is bullying someone else take action to stop the abuse.

Why is it important to stop bullying?

Bullying is a serious problem for all children involved. Children who are bullied are more likely to feel bad about themselves and be depressed. They may fear or lose interest in going to school and withdraw from other social activities.

Children who bully others are more likely to drop out of school, have drug and alcohol problems, and break the law.

What can children do if they are bullied?

Children are often scared and angry when they are bullied. They may not know what to do. Teach them to:

- Respond assertively. Say, "Leave me alone," or "You don't scare me." Have your child practice saying this in a calm, strong voice.
- Walk away. Don't run, even if you are afraid.
- Tell an adult. A parent, teacher or coach can then take steps to stop the bullying.

What can you do to stop bullying?

Bullying can be prevented if people pay attention and take action.

If bullying is happening at your child's school, talk to the principal or vice principal. Urge the school to adopt a no-bullying policy. All children should know that those who bully will be disciplined. Children who are bullied should be supported and protected.

As a parent, you can help your child get involved in new hobbies or groups, such as school clubs or church youth groups. Being part of a group can help reduce bullying. Having friends can help a child have a better self-image.

Children can help keep other kids from being bullied. If you are a child, don't let yourself be part of the problem.

- Speak up when you see someone else being picked on. It can help to say something like, "Cut it out. That's not funny." If this is too hard or scary to do, walk away and tell an adult.
- If someone sends you a mean email about another person, don't forward it to others. Print it out and show it to an adult.