

FIVE THINGS | to Know about Teen Dating Violence

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In 2012, President [Obama declared](#) February Teen Dating Violence (TDV) Awareness and Prevention Month, reaffirming the severity of this issue in the United States. Dating violence, a pattern of abusive acts used to gain power or control over a dating partner, places teens at risk for a host of negative outcomes. Notably, teens who experience dating violence are more likely to be involved in a violent intimate partner relationship as adults, and are at [increased risk](#) of teen pregnancy, depression, eating disorders, suicidal behaviors, low self-esteem, sexually transmitted diseases, and poor academic performance.



It may sound the same, but TDV is different from violence in adult romantic relationships. Below are five things you need to know about teen dating violence:

1

Teen dating violence is common.

Estimates suggest that between [one in ten](#) and [one in four teens](#) have experienced some form of dating violence. While no group is protected from TDV, rates are highest for [American Indian](#) and black teens. [Pregnant teens](#), teens from low-income backgrounds, and those whose parents were involved in a violent romantic relationship are also at increased risk for being involved in dating violence. [New research](#) shows that LGBT youth are more likely than their heterosexual peers to experience dating violence. And, rates of dating violence vary [by state](#).

2

Male and female teens are equally likely to perpetrate and experience dating violence.

Unlike [adult dating violence](#) (in heterosexual relationships), in which women are more often the victim and men the abuser, young men and women report perpetration and victimization [at equal rates](#), although teen males more often report perpetrating sexual abuse and teen females more often report perpetrating physical abuse. Females, however, tend to sustain physical injuries and require medical treatment at greater rates than males. A [study with LGBT adolescents](#) also found that males were more likely to perpetrate sexual coercion than females.

3

Technology changes everything.

Though forms of abuse (psychological, physical, financial, and sexual) for teen and adults are similar, social media, cell phones, and other technologies have provided the platform for cyber abuse, which has taken hold at alarming rates, particularly among teens. Between [10 and 25 percent of teens](#) report experiencing cyber abuse. This may take the form of sending threatening or emotionally abusive texts, emails, and messages, posting sexual pictures online, or monitoring a partner's cell or social media use. For example, [one-third of teens reported](#) that they had been texted 10 to 30 times an hour by a partner monitoring their behavior.

4

The warning signs in teens are different than in adults, and may be hard to detect.

Adolescence is a period of change, and it is hard to know when teens are going through something serious or just "being teens." Some factors that put teens at risk for [committing dating violence](#) include having an excessive temper, a history of fighting, or violent friends, and having witnessed violence as a child. Warning signs that a teen may be [experiencing dating violence](#) include isolation from friends and family; constant, urgent need to communicate with a dating partner; making excuses for a dating partner; decreased performance in school; and unexplained injuries.

5

There are ways to help.

Most teens date at some point before the end of their high school years. [Healthy relationships](#) that foster positive self-esteem and communication skills can play an important role in their development. Relationship education programs can help teens--particularly those most at risk for dating violence, such as pregnant and parenting teens--learn about and engage in healthy relationships and may have additional benefits such as [preventing teen pregnancy](#). A number of resources are available [for parents](#) and other adults who come into contact with teens to help them recognize dating violence and support healthy dating behaviors. For example, guidance counselors and teachers can use [this training](#) to learn to recognize the warning signs of teen dating violence and know how to respond, and a new [toolkit for healthcare providers](#) can help medical professionals incorporate screening for dating violence into routine visits with adolescents. Teens can check [out this site](#) to take a healthy relationship quiz and get other facts and resources on dating violence, or download [free, award-winning apps](#) aimed at preventing dating violence.

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