

Parental involvement key to preventing child bullying

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Communities across the United States are developing programs to address child bullying. New research shows that parents can play an important role in preventing their children from becoming bullies in the first place.

"Improving parent-child communication and parental involvement with their [children](#) could have a substantial impact on child bullying," said Rashmi Shetgiri, MD, MSHS, lead author of a study to be presented Monday, May 3 at the Pediatric Academic Societies (PAS) annual meeting in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

Dr. Shetgiri, a pediatrician and researcher at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center and Children's Medical Center Dallas, and colleagues analyzed data from the 2007 National Survey of Children's Health. Among the questions asked of 45,897 parents with children 10-17 years old was whether their child bullies or is cruel or mean to others. Researchers then identified factors that increased or reduced the risk of a child being a bully.

Results showed the prevalence of bullying was 15 percent. Factors increasing the risk included race, emotional/behavioral problems and mothers' mental health.

African-American and [Latino children](#) had a higher likelihood of being bullies compared to white children. In addition, children with emotional, developmental or behavioral problems and those whose mothers reported

having less than "very good" mental health also were more likely to be bullies. Other parental characteristics that increased the likelihood of child [bullying](#) were getting angry with their child frequently and feeling that their child often did things to bother them.

There also were factors that decreased the likelihood that a child will become a bully. Older children, those living in a home where the primary language spoken is not English and those who consistently did their homework were less likely to be bullies.

Parents also played a protective role. Those who shared ideas and talked with their child, and those who met most of their child's friends were less likely to have children who bully.

"Parents can also 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," Dr. Shetgiri said. "Lastly, parents can take advantage of parenting programs that can help them become aware of and manage negative feelings, such as anger, and respond to their child in a non-aggressive manner."

Provided by American Academy of Pediatrics

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