

The Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) Study is ongoing collaborative research between the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, GA, and Kaiser Permanente in San Diego, California, linking childhood trauma to long-term health and social consequences.

The initial phase of the study was conducted at Kaiser Permanente from 1995 to 1997. More than 17,000 participants completed a standardized physical examination. The study continues to examine the medical status of the baseline participants.

“The ACE Study findings suggest that certain experiences are major risk factors for the leading causes of illness and death as well as poor quality of life in the United States. It is critical to understand how some of the worst health and social problems in our nation can arise as a consequence of adverse childhood experiences. Realizing these connections is likely to improve efforts towards prevention and recovery.”
(Centers for Disease Control)

ACE Study: Major Findings

Adverse childhood experiences are common. Almost two-thirds of the study participants reported at least one ACE, and more than one of five reported three or more ACE. The short- and long-term outcomes of these childhood exposures include a multitude of health and social problems.

The ACE Study uses the ACE Score, which is a total count of the number of ACEs reported by respondents. The ACE Score is used to assess the total amount of stress during childhood and has demonstrated that as the number of ACEs increase, the risk for the following health problems increases in a strong and graded fashion:

- 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

NOTE: See <http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy/>
for additional information