

## Is Your Child at Risk of Being Bullied?

Every child is at risk of being bullied no matter what their personality is like. It is estimated by the U.S. Department of Education that over 10% of children in school are at some time the target of a bully. Because bullying can be directed to anyone, you should not assume that your child will never be a target. Many times bullying issues will resolve themselves or grade or school changes will separate the children involved in bullying. Sometimes, however, bullying will remain constant and will cause serious damage, both emotionally and physically, to the victim. Because bullying is such a serious issue, knowing the risk factors for being bullied is important in determining if your child is at an increased risk for being targeted by a bully.

Both boys and girls are most commonly bullied for being different, not fitting in, or lacking social skills. If your child has a handicap, has a hard time making friends, or fitting in with others, they have increased risk factors for being bullied. Children with differences such as small stature, physical defects, or cognitive difficulties are also at an increased risk factors for being bullied. Even if your child conforms to normal standards, they may have increased risk factors for being bullied if they are unpopular or are friends with other children who are bullied. Sometimes bullies even target children who are popular and confident because they are jealous so no child is safe from bullying.

Another risk factor for being bullied is bullying others. Children who bully others often find themselves as a target of bullying after they have victimized others. If your child bullies others, they may become the target of retaliation and become the victims themselves even after they stop victimizing others because the children they hurt want revenge. Warning signs of bullying behavior include general aggression, impulsiveness, the need to dominate, inability to cope with problems and the inability to empathize with others. If your child seems like the type that would bully others, they have increased risk factors for being bullied because victims often retaliate. Make sure your child understand that bullying is not acceptable and can have serious consequences for the rest of their lives.

If your child has risk factors for being bullied, you should monitor their behavior and look for warning signs of bullying. These signs include withdraw from friends and activities, sudden fear of going to school, unexpected complaints of illness such as stomach pains and headaches, constantly coming home with damaged or missing belongings, and unexplained depression.

Usually bullying can be stopped and long term damages avoided, but in severe

cases, both parties can be affected for life. Be sure to teach your child what to do if they are faced with a bully and how to stop bullying behavior so that they will not suffer in the long term from bullying experiences. Don't assume that your child will never be bullied, sometimes bullying occurs with no warning signs or the victims refuse to talk about it.