

IMPACTS OF INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE ON INFANTS & CHILDREN

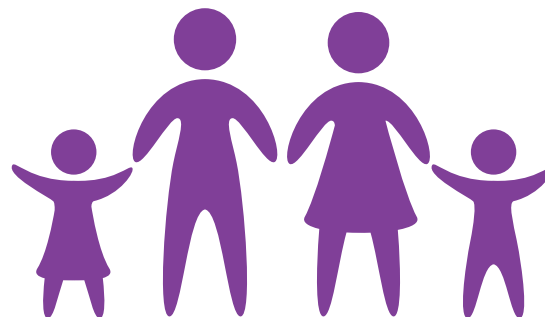
We are here to help.

Infant and child exposure to Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) can be experienced in many ways which include: directly witnessing or hearing the abuse, seeing the aftermath of a fight, being told about it by a sibling or noticing a change in their parent(s) or caregiver's behaviour. Children that witness or experience IPV may feel confused, scared or blame themselves. Babies and toddlers may not understand what is happening between adults, but the negative sights and sounds can cause trauma. Long-term stress, fear, and anxiety in children can be toxic to the brain and can change how they develop, think and feel. The impact of witnessing abuse is dependent on the age and developmental stage of the child, the frequency and severity of the abuse, and the current support systems in place.



Infants & Toddlers	
Key Aspects of Development	Potential Impact of IPV
Absorb information from the world around them using their five senses	Fearful of loud noises, excessive crying, more irritable, feeding & sleeping disturbances, increased alertness & sensitivity to surroundings
Form secure attachments	Needs may not be consistently met which impacts the parent-child bond
Explore their world & intimate behaviour through play	Fear & instability may not allow for play, leading to delays in development, may imitate aggression that is observed

Preschoolers	
Key Aspects of Development	Potential Impact of IPV
Learn how to express angry feelings and other emotions in appropriate ways	Learn unhealthy ways to express anger & aggression (hitting, fighting, biting), cruelty to animals
Increase physical independence	Exhibit more dependent & regressive behaviours such as clinginess, separation anxiety & developmental delays
Self-centered thinking	May blame themselves for parent's fighting, try to stop the fight



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School-Aged Children

Key Aspects of Development

Increased awareness of self and others

Increased complexity in thinking about right & wrong, more focus on fairness & purpose behind actions

Academic & social interactions have significant impact on how the child views themselves

Increased influence from peers. May engage in competitive or risk-taking behaviour

Increased awareness of gender roles, identity & expression

Potential Impact of IPV

More aware of how violence impacts themselves & their family, increased risk of post-traumatic stress disorder & depression

May try to understand reason for violence. May try to justify fighting, wondering if fighting was fair, can lead to self-blame or low self-esteem

May have difficulty learning & focusing in school which can lead to poor grades & low self-esteem. May focus on negative comments rather than positive feedback

May have attitude & behaviour concerns associated with abuse at home, may use aggression to compete, increased risk for bullying or being bullied, alcohol & drug use

May learn gender roles are associated with partner abuse (males are perpetrators, females are victims), increased risk of abusing their own partners or engaging in self-harm



Teenagers

Key Aspects of Development

Increased peer group influence & desire for acceptance

Increased influence by media

Increased sense of self & independence from family

Dating raises issues of sexuality, intimacy & relationship skills

Physical changes brought on by puberty, also increased risk of mental health concerns

Potential Impact of IPV

Family embarrassment resulting in shame, social withdrawal, insecurity, may use high-risk behaviours to impress peers, increase bullying / being bullied, may have poor peer relationships

More influence by negative media messages (violent behaviour, gender stereotypes)

May feel responsible, positioning themselves in caretaking roles, adolescence may be more difficult, drop-out of school or runaway

Difficulty establishing healthy relationships, fear of being abused, may avoid or prematurely seek intimacy, increased risk of human trafficking

May try to stop violence & be abused themselves, may use aggression to get their way, increased incidence of suicide, self-harm, anxiety & tension



Community Supports for Infants, Children & Families

Safe Centre of Peel

Multiple services offered at one location to support families affected by abuse & violence in the Region of Peel

Intake Line: (905)-450-4650

EarlyON & Family Centres

Offers free programs for caregivers & children from 0 to 6 years. You can learn & play with your child, meet different people and get advice from professionals

www.ontario.ca/page/find-earlyon-child-and-family-centre

Healthy Babies, Healthy Children (Region of Peel)

This program helps children have a healthy start in life by offering in-home support by both Public Health Nurses and Family Visitors at no cost to families

Intake Line: (905)-799-7700

www.parentinginpeel.ca

EveryMind Mental Health Services

Delivers mental health services to infants, children, youth, young adults & families. Services include assessment, treatment & education delivered by mental health professionals.

Intake Line: (905)-795-3500

Crisis Line: (416)-410-8615

WhereToStart.ca

Will connect you to the most appropriate mental health program or service in Peel

Intake Line: (905)-451-4655

Kids Help Phone

Provides 24/7 free, professional counselling, information & referral support to young people. Offered through phone, text or website.

Intake Line: 1-800-668-6868/

<https://kidshelpphone.ca/>

Nurturing Helps to Heal

Seeking support to take action against Intimate Partner Violence shows your child that abuse is not acceptable and can be stopped. Here are a few ways to support your infant and child during this time:



Region of Peel
Working for you

This document is also available in French. If you require this information in a different format or in any other language, please contact the Communications and Service Relations Department at 905-363-6131 ext. 1159 or via email at communications@peelcas.org.

