

# BULLYING IN THE PRIMARY CARE SETTING



## What is Bullying?

Bullying is the aggressive use of power to intentionally distress another individual. It is a form of peer abuse.

### Types of bullying

Direct:	Indirect/Relational:
Hitting/kicking	Gossiping
Name calling	Spreading rumours
Threats	Excluding/shunning
Email/text messages	Emails/text messages

Prevalence in Canada:

Children who bully others: 5–15%

Children who are bullied by others: 10–20%



## What can Primary Care Practitioners do?

Characterize the bullying involvement using the questions on reverse. Support the child. Treat symptoms/injuries requiring immediate attention.

### Multidisciplinary involvement

- Parents, School
  - Often adults are not aware of bullying involvement
- Social Worker/Psychologist
  - Children who bully need strategies to reduce aggressive behaviour, promote empathy
  - Children who are bullied need assertive strategies, friendship skills
- Therapists/Psychiatrists
  - where necessary for depression/anxiety symptoms, suicidality



## Resources for Primary Care Practitioners and Families

Promoting Relationships and Eliminating Violence Network  
[www.prevnet.ca](http://www.prevnet.ca)

Stand Up 2 Bullying, Canadian Red Cross  
[www.redcross.ca/article.asp?id=24700&tid=108](http://www.redcross.ca/article.asp?id=24700&tid=108)

Stop Bullying Now (US)  
[www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov](http://www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov)

Friendly Schools & Families (Australia)  
[www.friendlyschools.com.au/](http://www.friendlyschools.com.au/)

Canadian Public Health Association  
[acsp.cpha.ca/antibullying/English/bigdeal/bigdeal.html](http://acsp.cpha.ca/antibullying/English/bigdeal/bigdeal.html)

Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration (US)  
[mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/15plus/health](http://mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/15plus/health)





## Questions to ask if you suspect bullying involvement

1. How often do you bully others/are you bullied?  
*the more frequent, the higher the risk of problems*
2. How long have you bullied others/been bullied?  
*prolonged involvement is more likely to have established behaviour patterns*
3. Where do you bully others/are you bullied? (eg, school, home, sports, community)  
*across more relationships, greater risk of problems*
4. What types of bullying are used? (eg, hitting, insults, gossiping, text messaging)  
*though no direct comparisons between types, severity can be measured by distress caused to victimized child*



## Checklist of indicators

Children who bully others may exhibit:

YES NO

- Physical symptoms (headaches, stomachaches)
- Suicidal thoughts/suicide (in extreme cases)
- Poor school function (low grades, dropping out)
- Behavioural signs (little regard for others' feelings, aggressive with parents/siblings, possessing unexplained items/money)

Children who are bullied by others may exhibit:

YES NO

- Physical symptoms (headaches, stomachaches)
- Psychosomatic symptoms (difficulty sleeping, bedwetting)
- Depression/anxiety/psychosis symptoms
- Suicidal thoughts/suicide (in extreme cases)
- Poor school function (avoidance/refusal)
- Behavioural signs (loses items/money, injuries, damaged clothes/items)