

ACE – Adverse Childhood Experiences



Verbal abuse



Physical abuse



Domestic violence



Incarceration



Parental separation



Mental illness



Sexual abuse



Alcohol abuse



Drug use

Research into adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) consistently shows that a set of 10 adverse experiences in childhood are associated with an increased risk of poor health and other problems in later life. Findings from a recent systematic review of all ACE studies completed since 1998 observed that experiencing four or more ACEs, in comparison to experiencing no ACEs, typically:

- **doubles the risk of obesity, physical inactivity and diabetes**
- **triples the risk of smoking, cancer, heart disease or respiratory disease**
- **quadruples the risk of sexual risk-taking, mental health problems and**
- **problematic alcohol use**
- **increases the risk of problematic drug use and interpersonal and**
- **self-directed violence by seven-fold.**

It is also theorised that experiences of trauma in childhood may potentially lead to an increased risk of social problems including increased involvement of anti-social behaviour and involvement with the criminal justice system, however the research basis for this is still uncertain.

Many other negative circumstances in childhood are also associated with poor adult outcomes. These circumstances include; economic disadvantage, discrimination, peer victimisation, low birth weight and child disability.

For example, studies show that low family income may be a stronger predictor of poor physical health outcomes than many of the original ACE categories.

You can find a video clip explaining ACE's here.