

# The Impact on Children Exposed to Domestic Violence

## Observable Effects according to age

Broad age categories	Observed effects
<b>Pre-natal</b>	Studies show a much higher rate of miscarriages among women who are battered while they are pregnant than among women who are not. It is also believed that severe battering can be responsible for some birth defects and malformations of the fetus.
<b>Infants</b>	Battering and domestic violence need not take place directly upon the infant in order to affect them. Just by being subjected to the type of environment in which there may be frequent fighting, yelling, arguing and/or screaming causes excessive crying and irritability, fearful reactions to loud noises, sleep disturbances, lethargy, digestive problems, developmental delays (in learning to crawl, walk, talk, etc.), and sometimes neglect of the baby by the victimized mother.
<b>Toddlers &amp; preschoolers</b>	Exposure to domestic violence can cause children to be more aggressive (hitting, biting) or more withdrawn or clingy than other children; and often causes difficulty learning, developmental delays (verbal development, toilet training, poor motor skills), general fearfulness/anxiety, stomach aches, nightmares, lack of bowel and bladder control in children over the age of 3, lack of confidence to begin new tasks, frequent illness, severe shyness, and low self-esteem.
<b>Elementary/middle school</b>	Children exposed to family violence exhibit poor social skills, violent outbursts of anger, general aggressiveness, poor grades and/or failure on one or more grade levels, low self-esteem, bullying or withdrawn behavior, excessive dependency, bedwetting, nightmares, digestive problems, ulcers, headaches, eating disorders, frequent illness, hitting, lying, and stealing.
<b>Teenagers &amp; young adults</b>	Poor grades, failure in school (or quits school altogether), low self-esteem, refuses to bring friends home, stays away from home or feels responsible to take care of home and mother, runaway, violent outbursts of anger, destruction of property, poor judgement, substance abuse, irresponsible decision making, propensity to engage in gang activity, dating violence, inability to communicate feelings, immaturity, poor social skills, few friends, withdrawn from others, nightmares, ulcers, headaches, digestive problems, bedwetting, severe acne, joining in on abuse with parent.