



What can happen?

Why do people do it?

Who can I talk to?

Sometimes, the news makes all teens seem violent. Sometimes it seems like our schools aren't safe, that just about everyone belongs to a gang, and that all teens are carrying either a gun or a knife to school.

While violence is a real part of life, the truth is that . . .

- Schools are much safer than they show on TV.
- Most teens don't do violent things.
- Most students don't carry guns or knives to school.
- Most teens are not in violent gangs.
- Most violence doesn't even happen during school hours.

Sometimes violence does happen at school. The kind of violence that often takes place at school is emotional or physical abuse.

*Emotional abuse* happens when someone says or does something that hurts another person's feelings. Name-calling, teasing, playing head trips, putting someone down, threatening, isolating someone, controlling, and gossiping are all types of emotional abuse. This can lead to physical fights.

*Physical abuse* happens when someone harms another person, or several people hurt each other by . . .

- shoving
- slapping
- hitting
- scratching
- kicking
- other physical contact

Most of the time, the people fighting don't use weapons. When they do use weapons, they usually use things that are around all the time, like school supplies. A person can still get seriously hurt. Only a small number of fights involve the use of guns and knives.

### Who can I talk to?

You know who you feel comfortable talking to about problems. Sometimes it just helps to say the problem out loud and have someone listen. Sometimes another person can help you look at it in a different way or suggest a way to solve it that you hadn't thought of. The important thing is that you don't have to deal with problems alone. Who could you ask for help?

- a friend
- your parent or a friend's parent
- a teacher

- other family members
- a peer counselor or mediator
- a counselor
- a minister, priest, or rabbi
- your doctor or nurse
- someone at a phone crisis-line
- someone else you trust

### Why do people do it?

People hurt each other for a lot of different reasons. Sometimes they . . .

- Get mad about really small stuff, like someone borrowing something and not returning it.

### Have any of these things ever happened to you or someone you know at school?

- You are standing at your locker between classes, and someone shoves you and walks away laughing.
- While you are eating, someone comes up and grabs food from your tray.
- As you are walking to class, you hear two kids say your name loudly. Then they point at you and laugh.
- While you are sitting in class, someone who has been bothering you all year leans over and whispers to you, "I'm gonna get you."
- In class, someone calls you ugly and stupid, and everybody stares, waiting for you to do something.

These are examples of emotional and physical abuse. Sometimes they feel like a big deal, sometimes they don't. Sometimes they may lead to fights.

There are ways to stand up for yourself and stay safe.

- Think someone else looked at them funny.
- Want to show off, get attention, or feel powerful.
- Get bullied or hurt by someone else, like a parent or sibling at home, and take out their feelings on someone at school.
- Are afraid of being picked on, so they pick on others instead.
- Get jealous about or mad at someone they are dating.
- Are faking a fight, and it turns into a real fight when someone gets mad.
- Don't like someone because of their race.
- Don't like someone who's gay or lesbian.

### How can I avoid fighting?

A lot of teens don't get into fights. If you want to avoid being in a fight or want to stop getting into fights, you can do some of the things other teens do. Here are some examples:

- Hang out with friends you know you can trust.
- Hang out with people who don't get into fights.
- Don't pick on anyone.
- Talk it out or get friends or an adult to help you resolve your conflicts.
- Get support from adults you trust: parents, teachers or older people in your family.
- Talk to a counselor or peer mediator.

- Tell an adult if you know someone is carrying a weapon, especially a gun or knife.
- Avoid alcohol and drug use. A lot of fights happen when someone has been drinking or using drugs.

### What if someone wants to fight me?

Even if someone wants to fight you, you have choices. Sometimes, you can avoid the fight. Try one of these ideas:

- If it feels safe to you, try to talk to the person who wants to fight with you. See if you can settle it without fighting.
- Ask your friends to help you find a way to get out of the fight.
- Talk to an adult you can trust.

### What if I see a fight?

When people stand around watching a fight and cheering it on, the people fighting get more violent than if no one was watching or if someone tried to stop the fight. If a friend wants you to go watch a fight, you can . . .

- Tell your friend that you don't want to go.
- Ask to do something else instead, like getting something to eat.
- Say that you've got somewhere else you need to be.
- Ask if she or he will help you try to stop the fight before it starts.
- Get someone else, like a teacher, to stop the fight.
- Tell your friend that you think fights are boring and stupid.

### Getting help from Kaiser Permanente

Teens can make their own appointments and come in to see a doctor, nurse, or counselor at Kaiser Permanente clinics. Some Kaiser Permanente facilities have a teen clinic with information and services especially for teens. All facilities have doctors, nurses, health educators, or mental health professionals who see teen patients.

To make an appointment or to talk with an advice nurse, call your local Kaiser Permanente facility.

#### More resources

##### Web sites

- Kaiser Permanente: [kp.org](http://kp.org)
- KidsHealth Teen Page: [kidshealth.org/teen](http://kidshealth.org/teen)
- Planned Parenthood's Teen Page: [teenwire.com](http://teenwire.com)

##### Phone numbers

- California Youth Crisis Hotline  
1-800-843-5200
- Child Abuse Hotline  
1-800-4 A CHILD
- National STD Hotline  
1-800-227-8922
- National Alcohol/Drugs Helpline  
1-800-662-HELP
- Emergency Contraception Hotline  
1-888-NOT-2-LATE
- Check your *Kaiser Permanente Healthwise Handbook*.
- Visit your local Health Education Department or Center.