

Bullying

Bullying is when one child intends to hurt or intimidate another child and does it repeatedly. Both boys and girls bully. Bullies tend to pick on children who cry, become angry or give into them. It can occur during school, at the playground or in the neighborhood; typically when adults are not watching. "Cyberbullying" can also occur through email, instant messaging and texting.

There are 3 kinds of bullying:

- Physical – Hitting, kicking, pushing, choking
- Verbal – threatening, taunting, teasing, hate speech
- Social – starting rumors, excluding victims from activities

Bullying is not the same as fighting or teasing. Bullying involves having power and control over the victim. It typically happens when other children are watching.

Detect whether your child is being bullied by asking the following:

- How are things going at school?
- What do you think about your classmates?
- Is anyone being bullied at school?

And looking for these signs:

- Not wanting to go to school or participate in an activity
- Being upset after using the computer or cell phone
- Seeming sad, withdrawn or moody

If your child is being bullied, teach him how to respond:

- Look the bully in the eye
- Stand tall and stay calm
- Walk away
- Say in a firm voice – "I don't like what you're doing," "Do not talk to me like that," "Why would you say that?"

You may need to have your child practice these things at home so he is ready when the stressful situation arises. Encourage your child to make friends and get together with other children. Have your child become involved in groups with adult supervision such as team sports, music groups or clubs.

Your child should be taught to ask for help if being bullied. Encourage him to tell you, a teacher or other school official that it is happening. You may need to alert school officials and work with them on solutions.

What to do if your child is the bully:

- Remember, bullying is a behavior not an identity. It needs to be addressed. If it is allowed to continue, the behavior can worsen and continue into adulthood, affecting work and family life.
- Set firm and consistent limits on aggressive behavior. Your child needs to know that bullying is never acceptable.
- Be a positive role model.
- Teach your child that he can get things without being threatening. Treat others with respect.
- Provide nonphysical discipline such as loss of privileges.
- Talk to your child about how bullying hurts other children.
- Work with school officials and the parents of the bullied child to find positive interventions.

Reference: healthychildren.org – American Academy of Pediatrics