

Intervention needed to reduce lifelong effects associated with childhood neglect and emotional abuse

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Preschool children who have been neglected or emotionally abused exhibit a range of emotional and behavioral difficulties and adverse mother-child interactions that indicate these children require prompt evaluation and interventions, according to a systematic review by Aideen Mary Naughton, M.B., B.Ch., B.A.O., D.C.H., F.R.C.P.C.H., of Public Health Wales, Pontypool, England, and colleagues.

A total of 42 studies of children age 0 to 6 years with confirmed neglect or emotional abuse who had emotional, behavioral, and developmental features recorded or for whom the carer-child interaction was documented were analyzed.

Key features in the child included aggression, withdrawal or passivity, [developmental delay](#), poor peer interaction, and transition from ambivalent to avoidant insecure attachment pattern and from passive to increasingly aggressive behavior and negative self-representation. Emotional knowledge, cognitive function, and language deteriorate without intervention. Poor sensitivity, hospitality, criticism, or disinterest characterize maternal-child interactions.

"Lifelong consequences include physical and [mental health problems](#); impairments in language, social, and communication skills; and severe effects on [brain development](#) and hormonal functioning." The study concludes, "early intervention has the potential to change children's

lives."

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