

How Domestic Violence Affects Children ~ from SafeHouse for Battered Women, Inc. ~

Children from violent homes may show some of the following:

Before Birth

- Miscarriage (some violent men become more physically abusive when their partner is pregnant and hit her in the abdomen)
- Some research shows that babies in the womb can be affected by the fear and anxiety experienced by their mothers

Infants

- Tend to be irritable
- Can be frequently ill and/or have diarrhea
- Have difficulty sleeping or eating
- Have tantrums and anxiety

Toddlers and Preschool

- Physical complaints such as stomach aches and headaches
- Fearful of being alone, afraid of leaving their mothers
- Irritable, tantrums, anxiety
- Regress to earlier childhood behaviors such as bedwetting
- Difficulty sleeping
- Frequent injuries

School Age

- Eager to please adults and make new friends
- Problems in school, fears or drop in performance
- Wants to be home to protect mother
- Physical complaints, frequent injuries
- Tantrums and anxiety
- Eating and sleeping difficulties
- Feels responsible for mother's pain and for making violence stop

Adolescents and Teenagers

- Can be very protective of mother or can become aggressive and violent with mother, siblings and other children
- Secretive, often deny violence in the home
- School problems such as absenteeism, failing or hostile behavior
- Depression and self mutilation
- Physical Complaints
- Eating disorders, alcohol or drug abuse
- Can accept blame for the family violence ("it's all my fault")

Note: All the above situations can apply at any age. These children are at high risk for child abuse, incest and sexual abuse. Witnessing domestic violence is terrifying for children.