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[Health News](#)

Intervention to prevent PTSD in children

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PHILADELPHIA, Oct. 6 (UPI) -- One in five children may get post-traumatic stress disorder after a traumatic event such as a car crash, an assault or other violence, U.S. researchers say.

Lead author Dr. Steven Berkowitz of the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine, director of the Penn Center for Youth and Family Trauma Response and Recovery, says the study involved 106 children ages 7-17 and a caregiver randomly assigned to receive the four-session Child and Family Traumatic Stress Intervention. Others received a four-session supportive comparison intervention.

The intervention began with an initial baseline assessment to measure the children's trauma history and preliminary visits with caregivers.

After two additional sessions, the clinician, caregiver and child decide on a homework assignment to practice certain coping skills.

"This is the first preventative intervention to improve outcomes in children who have experienced a potentially traumatic event, and the first to reduce the onset of PTSD in kids," Berkowitz says in a statement. "If this study is replicated and validated in future studies, this intervention could be used nationally to help children successfully recover from a traumatic event without progressing to PTSD."

The study is published online in the Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry.

Study: Early intervention reduces risk of PTSD in children

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By: [Maiken Scott](#)
mscott@whyy.org

Brief therapy interventions after traumatic events can make a BIG difference in the lives of children—that's according to a new study from the University of Pennsylvania.

About 1 in five children who are injured, abused, or victims of violence develop Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, PTSD. In this study, children who took part in four therapy sessions within 30 days after the traumatic event saw those odds reduced by 73 percent.

Lead investigator Steven Berkowitz is director of the Penn Center for Youth and Family Trauma Response and Recovery. He says both parents and children participated in the therapy interventions, to improve communication around the traumatic event, and to increase support for the child.

Berkowitz says children's brains are more susceptible to the effects of PTSD, and left untreated, they can develop long-term difficulties:

Berkowitz: There are lots of findings, increased rates of suicide, alcoholism and other substance abuse, obesity is tied to PTSD, as is cardiovascular disease, lung disease and liver disease

Berkowitz says with millions of American children experiencing trauma each year, he hopes this kind of intervention eventually will be offered routinely:

Berkowitz: these are the sorts of early interventions that prevent poor outcomes for kids that need to be embedded in the service delivery systems where children are: schools, emergency department, hospitals

The study now appears online in the Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry.