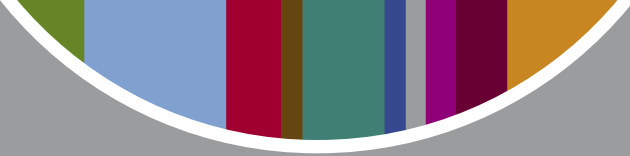




Street Violence

*Your Child Has
Been Hurt —
What You Can Do*





Street violence may include actual or threatened assault, robbery, or worse — rape, sexual assault, or homicide. And some, but not all, street violence may be gang-related.

However, most violence, including homicide, results from arguments or conflicts between friends and acquaintances. Sometimes, children and teens are just in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Those injured in a fight, robbery, or assault who require medical attention are six times more likely to get hurt again. Now — while your child is recovering — is the time to teach your child about avoiding future injuries.

With an increasing number of young people using weapons and responding with greater violence, fights often result in injury or even death. Youth who use weapons are more likely to inflict serious injury or even death.

What You Can Say and Do

- ▶ Talk with your child about the fight.
- ▶ Listen to the whole story; try not to interrupt, scold, or judge.
- ▶ Pay attention to how your child is feeling. Being threatened and/or hurt can be frightening and embarrassing.
- ▶ Find out what caused the fight. This may help avoid a future one.

***Did it start with an argument?
An insult? Was it revenge?***

Help your child resolve the problem.

- ▶ “What else could you have done besides fighting?”

Tell your child that it's more important to know how to walk away from a fight than it is to know how to win one. Teach your child that it's possible to stand up for yourself without fighting.

- ▶ Should someone else be involved? This might be a peer mediator at school, a coach, a youth leader, or a faith leader.

Did it result from being robbed? Getting jumped?

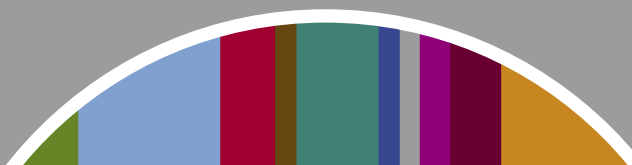
Avoid blame; it was not your child's fault. Discuss how not to be in a similar situation in the future.


- ▶ "Were you in an unsafe area?"
- ▶ "Did the time of day play a role?"
- ▶ "Can you walk home with a friend?"
- ▶ "Can you take another bus or walk down another street?"

Make sure that your child carries a cell phone if age appropriate and uses it if necessary.

Find out if the fight is over. Involve your child in getting this situation resolved.

- ▶ "Are you still afraid?"
- ▶ "Are you thinking about getting even?"
- ▶ "Do you think the other person is looking for revenge?"
- ▶ "Is there anyone you would like to talk with about this?"





If this is an ongoing fight, or your child is being bullied, talk with others. This could be the doctor, nurse, or social worker caring for your child. You might also want to talk with someone at your child's school, the police, or other parents. Any of these people can help you think through a safety plan.

Develop a Safety Plan

Vary Routines to Avoid Known Threats

- ▶ Leave home or school at a different time.
- ▶ Walk down a different street, take a different route.
- ▶ Use a different bus or go to a different bus stop.
- ▶ Try not to travel alone.

Guard against Robbery

- ▶ Use care when wearing new or desired clothing, wearing jewelry, or using electronic devices.
- ▶ Know the situation. Sometimes, standing up for yourself makes sense, and other times it makes sense to "hand it over." Things can be replaced, people can't.

Seek a Safe Place When Being Followed

- ▶ Walk or run into a store. If you don't have a phone, ask to use one for an emergency and call home or the police. Ask for a ride.
- ▶ Go to a friend's home. Knock on the door and get inside quickly.
- ▶ Walk into the police or fire station or any other public building.

Ways to Protect Your Child — Some Facts and Tips

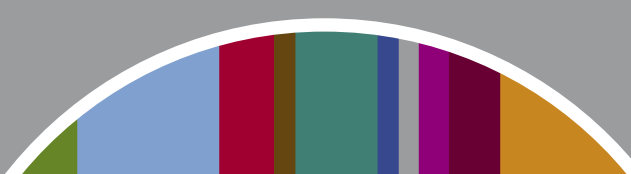
FACT Children with problems such as truancy, drug use, or behavioral and emotional problems often get in fights.

TIP If you notice any of these problems in your child, speak with the nurse, social worker, or your child's doctor today; or with someone at your child's school, the police, or other parents. They can refer you to someone in your community who can help.

FACT Weapons do *not* make your child safer.

TIP If you have children or teenagers at home, make sure there are no weapons in the house. If there is a gun in the home, keep it locked, unloaded, and separate from the ammunition — which should also be in a locked place. Weapons can turn troubles into a tragedy!

TIP Talk with your child about the realities of carrying a weapon. Carrying a weapon makes people feel bold. If another person sees a weapon, that person may have a gun — and use it. Carrying a weapon gives a false sense of protection and may actually make a young person less safe!





Help Your Child Learn New Behaviors and New Ways of Thinking

- ▶ When you resolve arguments or conflicts in a peaceful manner, you will be teaching your child how to safely respond to violence.
- ▶ Your child may be “at risk” without even knowing it. Help your child think about what could result from wearing the latest clothing or expensive jewelry and being in unfamiliar places.
- ▶ If your child is attending a party or gathering, be sure you know if adults will be present. Talk to your child about staying safe, as well as alcohol- and drug-free. Substance use can make both the aggressor and the victim feel they are invincible.



Keeping an Argument from Turning into a Fight: Tips to Share with Your Child

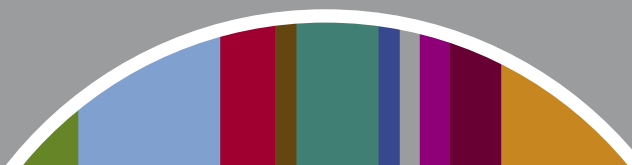
- ▶ Keep your temper. Avoid using insults — this will just make matters worse.
- ▶ Understand that the other person is just like you — a kid who just wants to be heard, who might not be looking for a fight but just wants to communicate some ideas or thoughts.
- ▶ Find out the reason for the argument. Try to resolve it without fighting.
- ▶ If there is a crowd encouraging you to fight, try to remove yourself along with the other; ask, “Can we take this somewhere else?” If none of this works — try walking away without turning your back. Show that you are NOT afraid, even if you are.

Finally

Let your child know: “Whatever the issue, it’s almost never worth fighting over. And it’s OK to admit that the situation was intense.”

Children and teenagers hurt in a fight are much more likely to be injured in the future. The doctors, nurses, and social workers caring for your child are here to help. Let them know your concerns, and use this injury as an opportunity to prevent future — possibly more serious — injuries.

Children who are hurt in a fight or are threatened may hide it from their parents. They feel too ashamed to talk about it.



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MASSACHUSETTS MEDICAL SOCIETY ALLIANCE

This tip card is part of a series originated by Robert Sege, MD, PhD, Boston, MA, and developed with the Massachusetts Medical Society's Committee on Violence Intervention and Prevention.

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