

Childhood Sexual Assault

...emotional and behavioral sequelae¹

In addition to long-term physical harm that may be caused by sexual victimization, there is a growing body of research that links sexual victimization with a wide range of emotional and behavioral sequelae. These responses may, in turn, lead to additional health care problems and are frequently associated with over-utilization of health care resources, often as a result of the failure to recognize underlying etiology. The following list includes clinical presentations frequently associated with victimization:

Potential long-term effects of sexual victimization

- Depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress.
- Eating disorders, sleep disturbances.
- Alcohol, drug, and tobacco use.
- Somatizing disorders (e.g.chronic pelvic pain, migraines, gastrointestinal disorders).
- Early initiation of sexual activity, compulsive sexual behaviors, sexual dysfunction.
- Poor or no contraceptive compliance.
- Self-neglect, malnutrition, failure to thrive.
- Aggression towards self and others.
- Suicide attempts.
- Poor adherence to medical recommendations.
- Diminished capacity for acquisition of knowledge (especially in children).
- Lying, stealing, truancy, and running away (in children).

If you have any questions about these or other effects of sexual violence , call the Virginia Family Violence & Sexual Assault Hotline at 1-800-838-8238 for more information.

¹From: *The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists*
www.acog.org