

# Childhood physical abuse linked to cancer

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Childhood physical abuse is associated with elevated rates of cancer in adulthood, according to a new study by University of Toronto researchers.

The study, to be published July 15 in the journal *Cancer*, shows those individuals physically abused in childhood are more likely to develop cancer than those who have not been abused. Childhood [physical abuse](#) is associated with 49 per cent higher odds of cancer in adulthood, says Esme Fuller-Thomson of U of T's Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work and Department of Family and Community Medicine.

"Few talk about childhood physical abuse and cancer in the same breath," says Fuller-Thomson. "From a public health perspective, it's extremely important that clinicians be aware of the full range of risk factors for cancer. This research provides important new knowledge about a potential childhood abuse-cancer relationship."

The study's findings showed the association between childhood abuse and cancer remained significant even after controlling for three major potentially confounding factors: childhood stressors, adult health behaviors (i.e. smoking, physical inactivity, [alcohol consumption](#)) and adult [socioeconomic status](#).

Co-author Sarah Brennenstuhl, a doctoral student at Uof T, notes that various psychophysiological factors could help to explain the link between childhood physical abuse and [cancer](#). "One important avenue for future research is to investigate dysfunctions in cortisol production -

the hormone that prepares us for 'fight or flight' -as a possible mediator in the abuse-cancer relationship."

Source: University of Toronto ([news](#) : [web](#))

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