

# Ten-Year Research Update Review: Child Sexual Abuse

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## Abstract

**Objective:** To provide clinicians with current information on prevalence, risk factors, outcomes, treatment, and prevention of child sexual abuse (CSA). To examine the best-documented examples of psychopathology attributable to CSA. **Method:** Computer literature searches of *Medicine* and *PSYCinfo* for key words. All English-language articles published after 1989 containing empirical data pertaining to CSA were reviewed. **Results:** CSA constitutes approximately 10% of officially substantiated child maltreatment cases, numbering approximately 88,000 in 2000. Adjusted prevalence rates are 16.8% and 7.9% for adult women and men, respectively. Risk factors include gender, age, disabilities, and parental dysfunction. A range of symptoms and disorders has been associated with CSA, but depression in adults and sexualized behaviors in children are the best-documented outcomes. To date, cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) of the child and a nonoffending parent is the most effective treatment. Prevention efforts have focused on child education to increase awareness and home visitation to decrease risk factors. **Conclusions:** CSA is a significant risk factor for psychopathology, especially depression and substance abuse. Preliminary research indicates that CBT is effective for some symptoms, but longitudinal follow-up and large-scale “effectiveness” studies are needed. Prevention programs have problems, but evaluations to date are limited. *J. Am. Acad. Child Adolesc. Psychiatry*, 2003, 42(3): 269-278.