

“**My father always used to smack my bottom** to discipline me and I turned out fine. On the contrary, I’ve always towed the line. He will learn like I did.”

“**I feel so bad...** I was exhausted and I had no one to help me. He didn’t stop crying for hours. I didn’t know what to do... I hit him so hard that he fell and lost consciousness.”

“In my country, when you don’t stop talking, you get hit with a ruler. **We have always done this with my son.** I arrived here and I have been threatened to be reported to the DYP and the police. I don’t understand.”



## What do we mean by physical abuse?

Depending on our life story and our baggage, the boundary between standard educational practices and physical abuse may be blurred. In Québec, physical violence is defined by Article 38 (e) of the Youth Protection Act (YPA):

*[A situation in which the child runs a serious risk of becoming the victim of physical abuse or being subjected to unreasonable methods of upbringing by their parents or another person, and the child’s parents fail to take the necessary steps to put an end to the situation.]*

A child needs limits and guidance for a healthy development and to learn how to respect the rules. However, physical discipline (e.g.: smacking, hitting, pinching, threatening, throwing objects) is harmful to children and does not comply with the objectives of the YPA.

Here are some examples of physical abuse under the YPA:

- **Abusive discipline:** inappropriate punishment and excessive discipline to educate a child.
- **Irrational brutality:** parent’s inability to control their anger and aggressiveness towards their child.
- **Extreme restriction and deprivation:** depriving the child of food, sleep, physical care, accommodation and other requirements for the child’s physical and immediate wellbeing as a means of punishment.
- **Shaken baby:** syndrome resulting from brain injury and other injuries caused when infants and young children are shaken.
- **Child intoxication:** intoxication from medication, drugs, alcohol or toxic products used to calm the child, make them fall a sleep, prevent them from crying or complaining.

## Legal impacts



Depending on the situation, criminal accusations may be filed against a parent following physical abuse:

### Use of force against a child – Assault Article 265 (1)

Using force against your child without their consent.

Examples: pulling their ears, pulling their hair, pinching, punching, pushing, etc.

### Assault with an object – Assault with a weapon Article 267 (a)

Examples: hitting with a belt, stick, coat hanger, wooden spoon, shoe or wire (on any part of the body).

### Causing bodily harm Article 267 (b)

Examples: scratches, bruises, fractures, cuts, red patches, burns, etc.

### Uttering threats Article 264.1 (1)

Examples: threatening to kill your child or hit your child leaving marks.

### Abandoning a child Article 218

Examples: leaving a child under 10 at home alone without supervision.

### Absent parents – Duty to provide necessities of life Article 215 (1)

Applicable mainly to children under 16 or any person of any age with special needs.

Examples: providing medical care, food, clothing, accommodation and protection.

### Manslaughter Article 232 (1)

Example: a baby dies as a result of being shaken.



## Other impacts



### Impact on your relationship with your child

The bond of trust with your child may be weakened and your relationship with them risks deteriorating over time. Child victims of physical abuse generally feel less secure with you. Babies are hypersensitive and may quickly associate your smell and your voice with violent gestures and develop fear responses when you come into contact with them.

### Impact on child social and emotional development

Child victims of physical abuse experience chronic stress and feelings of insecurity. These experiences put them at risk of developing attachment problems (difficulties trusting people, integrating and developing intimate and friendly relationships), post-traumatic symptoms, risky behaviour (recklessness, illegal substance abuse, potentially dangerous sexual behaviour) and delinquent behaviour.

### Impact on child physical development

Child victims of physical abuse may develop an internal alarm system that is hypersensitive to stress. Their brain development and maturation may be affected and the consequences may continue to adulthood. They are also at risk of developing serious psychiatric disorders where they are unable to tell the difference between reality and their imagination (e.g.: schizophrenia, delusional disorder, bipolar disorder, etc.).

### Impact on child cognitive development

Child victims of physical abuse are at risk of developing speech problems (delay, pronunciation difficulties, mutism, stuttering) and cognitive deficits (learning difficulties, attention deficits, memory problems, etc.). These difficulties may compromise their academic engagement and success and their ability to find employment.





## Do you recognize yourself?

Like all parents, you have to face difficult times with your children. You may feel overwhelmed when they are inconsolable, disorganized, loud or insolent. Everyday situations may get out of hand and you can lose your temper with them.

When we have experienced mistreatment during our childhood, our trauma memory and our insecurities may lead us to repeat the same physical abuse with our own children. Especially when we are feeling very stressed at home or at work. Raising children is taxing and it can be difficult to always take the necessary step back in order to calmly defuse certain situations. Sometimes, we are under the impression that we have no other choice but to use physical discipline to get our children to listen to us. However, physical abuse may have serious consequences for our children and ourselves.

As a parent, you are your child's first role model. How you behave towards your child may enhance or harm their development. You should help your child become a responsible adult. Your child needs to respect you and you should respect your child. Respect between parent and child is a decisive factor in building a strong bond and balanced relationship.



## Family support resources

No one is immune from needing support at one time or another. Being a parent is a lifelong responsibility and you may encounter some difficulties. If you feel overwhelmed and you need support with your child, resources and services are available.

Please find below some crisis centres, helplines and referral centres which are available 24/7.

### Info-Santé and Info-Social:

☎ 811

### Emergency - Reporting a matter to the Director of Youth Protection (DYP):

French-speaking and allophone clients

☎ 514 896-3100

English-speaking and Jewish clients

☎ 514 935-6196

### Santé Montréal:

🌐 [santemontreal.qc.ca/population/services/crise-familiale/](https://santemontreal.qc.ca/population/services/crise-familiale/)

### Espace sans violence:

🌐 [espacesansviolence.org/ressources-2/](https://espacesansviolence.org/ressources-2/)

### Parent Line:

☎ 1 800 361-5085

🌐 [ligneparents.com/LigneParents](https://ligneparents.com/LigneParents)



# PREVENTING PHYSICAL ABUSE AGAINST OUR CHILDREN