

## WHAT IS THE PEDIATRIC ACES AND RELATED LIFE-EVENTS SCREENER (PEARLS)?

At your child’s pediatrician visit, you will be asked to complete the **PE**diatric **ACE**s and **RE**lated **LI**fe-events **SC**reener (PEARLS) to better understand your child’s trauma experiences. We are interested in this information as childhood traumas have been linked to serious and lasting physical, emotional, and mental health consequences.



### STEP 1: WHAT ARE EXAMPLES OF CHILDHOOD TRAUMA?

Childhood trauma, or adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) can include<sup>1</sup>:

- Emotional abuse
- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Emotional neglect
- Physical neglect
- Mother treated violently
- Household substance abuse
- Household mental illness
- Parental separation or divorce
- Incarcerated household member
- Bullying (by another child or adult)
- Witnessing violence outside the home
- Witnessing a brother or sister being abused
- Racism, sexism, or any other form of discrimination
- Being homeless
- Natural disasters and war

### STEP 2: WHAT DOES THE SCORE ON THE PEARLS SCREENER MEAN<sup>2</sup>?

The score on the PEARLS screener will provide us with information on the number of childhood traumas your child has experienced. Research has found that the higher the total PEARLS score, the greater the risk for poorer physical, behavioral, and mental health outcomes (listed below). However, we know that early intervention and prevention is key to protecting your child and we will use your ACE score to help connect you to resources.

**Health**  
Obesity  
Diabetes  
Cancer  
Heart disease

**Behaviors**  
Alcoholism  
Smoking  
Drug use  
Unsafe sex

**Mental Health**  
Depression  
Anxiety  
Suicide attempts  
Posttraumatic stress

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## STEP 3: HOW CAN I HELP MY CHILD?

It is important to know that parents/caregivers play a critical role in buffering the impact of childhood trauma and building their child's resilience. Research has found that creating positive experiences with your child and being a caring, consistent adult in your child's life can serve as a protective factor against adversity. Here are some ways to help build resilience:

- Play with your child! Allocate 5 minutes a day where you and your child have fun together and play.
- Providing your child with healthy nutritious options for snacks and meals, encouraging exercise and activity, and making sure they are on a routine sleep schedule, are significant factors in promoting your child's well-being
- Model for your child ways to manage their emotions. You can practice calming skills together like taking deep breaths when you are both upset
- Identify your child's strengths and praise them multiple times a day

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## STEP 4: WHAT ARE SOME RESOURCES THAT CAN HELP ME UNDERSTAND ACES BETTER?

ACES 101

<http://acestoohigh.com/aces-101/>

CDC-Kaiser Adverse Childhood Experiences Study

[www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy/](http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy/)

Childhood trauma TED talk by Dr. Nadine Burke Harris

[https://www.ted.com/talks/nadine\\_burke\\_harris\\_how\\_childhood\\_trauma\\_affects\\_health\\_across\\_a\\_life\\_time#t-622453](https://www.ted.com/talks/nadine_burke_harris_how_childhood_trauma_affects_health_across_a_life_time#t-622453)

<sup>1</sup>More information on childhood trauma can be found at The National Child Traumatic Stress Network: <https://www.nctsn.org/>

<sup>2</sup>More information on health risks as a result of exposure to ACEs can be found at: Center for Youth Wellness <https://centerforyouthwellness.org/>

<sup>3</sup>More information on building resilience with your child can be found at <https://srhd.org/1-2-3-care-toolkit>