

Teen Substance Abuse Risks

Addiction risk has genetic factors as well as psychological, social, & environmental factors such as stress, history of trauma, others' substance use, & access to substance. Using at a young age increases the risk of adult dependence, & chronic use leads to brain changes.

The Brain area associated with reward, motivation & impulsivity matures earlier than the area associated with moderating risks. This normal development occurs around puberty, leading teens to risk-taking behaviour. As teens seek greater independence & acceptance from peers, drug & alcohol use is sometimes present.

Teens Years pose some of the most difficult challenges – teens sometimes feel as though no one understands their feelings. As a result, they may feel angry, alone, & confused while facing complicated issues about identity, peers, sexual behavior, drinking, & drugs.

Teen Stress Habits model adult stress habits. Teens are reporting they are experiencing unhealthy stress levels without effective stress management techniques.

Solutions are the responsibility of Parents & Teens

Parents

- Understand the risks & talk about them openly
- Support teens to stay in school & to succeed
- Learn more ways to stay connected – you play the most important role.

Teens

- Learn decision-making skills, healthy coping habits, & substance use resistance skills
- Learn resilience – that's the bounce back that helps us become even stronger through stress. Socialize, be positive, nurture yourself, set & reach goals, express yourself & your independence, help others, & keep things in perspective
- Get help – talk to family, your medical team, psychologists, technology based mental health supports, & community supports
- Try a mental health app

Psychology can help!

- Psychologists have tools to assess the risk & protective factors, to test behavioral or emotional problems, & to continually monitor treatment progress
- Psychologists offer programs & treatments that effectively engage families, schools, & communities, that is, the critical social supports that can guarantee lasting well-being for children & youth

Resources

Teens: <http://www.apa.org/topics/teens/index.aspx> Substance Abuse <http://cpa.ca/psychologyfactsheets>

Canadian Centre on Substance Use & Addiction: <http://www.ccdus.ca/Eng/Pages/default.aspx>

Alberta Addiction Helpline: 780-427-7164; Alberta Health Link 811; Toll Free Distress Line 1-800-232-7288

Dunne, T., Bishop, L., Avery, S. & Darcy, S. (2017). A review of effective youth engagement strategies for mental health & substance use interventions. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 60*(5), 487–512

Spear, L. P. (2013). Adolescent neurodevelopment. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 52*(2 Suppl), S7–S13.