



How to support teenage mental health



Mental health conditions in teens are more than just age-related angst. They are real, common, and treatable. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's *Youth Risk Study 2011–2021* has revealed a significant increase in the rates of teen anxiety, depression, and suicide.* That's why it's vital to support teenagers' mental health and know the early warning signs of self-harm.

What could cause poor mental health in teens

From the age of 10 to 20, many things shape mental health, including:

- Demands of school, sports, and work
- Family conflicts and changes
- Gender identity
- Lack of sleep
- Peer pressure and changes in relationships
- Social media use

Take the threat of suicide seriously

If you or someone you know is in crisis or has suicidal thoughts, seek help right away. Call **988** to reach the 24/7 National Suicide Prevention Lifeline or chat with them at [988lifeline.org](https://www.988lifeline.org). If it's an emergency, call 911 or go to your nearest emergency room.

Signs and symptoms of mental health issues in teens

If you're around teens, be aware of:

- Changes in eating, exercise habits, or sleep.
- Isolation from friends or withdrawal from activities.
- Negative comments about themselves.
- Prolonged mood changes, such as persistent sadness, anger, or anxiety.
- Talk of hurting themselves or feeling hopeless, trapped, or in pain.
- Use of alcohol or drugs.

How you can support a teen's mental health

Teens want to know someone cares for them. Part of caring includes setting limits. When giving support, it's important to:

- Accept them for who they are, encourage them to talk openly, and listen without judging.
- Encourage them to be involved in school, sports, or other activities, but don't pressure them to achieve.
- Let them work through smaller issues and negative feelings to build coping methods.
- Make sure they're getting enough sleep and keep phones out of bedrooms at night.
- Talk with them about what they see on social media. Set time limits, especially for younger teens.

What to do when someone needs help

If a friend or family member is showing signs of a mental health issue:

- Schedule a visit with their regular doctor.
- Encourage them to meet with a counselor at school or talk with a therapist by video or text using our SydneySM Health mobile app.
- Talk to a nurse for guidance 24/7 by calling the NurseLine at the number on your health plan ID card.
- Check if your health plan or employer has an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for mental health resources.
- Minimize access to means of self-harm, such as firearms, prescription medicines, and sharp objects like razors or knives.



Finding help

Talking with a doctor or therapist can help. To find a care provider in your plan's network, use the Find Care feature on our Sydney Health mobile app or at [anthembluecross.com/find-care](https://www.anthembluecross.com/find-care).

Sources:

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention: Risk factors, protective factors, and warning signs (accessed July 2023): afsp.org.
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Adolescent and School Health, Mental Health (accessed July 2023): [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov).
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the U.S. Surgeon General: Youth Mental Health (accessed July 2023): [hhs.gov](https://www.hhs.gov).
World Health Organization: Mental health of adolescents (accessed July 2023): [who.int](https://www.who.int).

* Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Youth Risk Behavior Report 2011–2021 (accessed July 2023): [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov).

Online counseling is not appropriate for all kinds of problems. If you are in crisis or have suicidal thoughts, it's important that you seek help immediately. Please call 988 (National Suicide Prevention Lifeline) and ask for help. If your issue is an emergency, call 911 or go to your nearest emergency room.

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