



Mental Health During COVID-19: Signs Your Teen May Need More Support

The stress, fear and uncertainty created by the COVID-19 ([/English/health-issues/conditions/chest-lungs/Pages/2019-Novel-Coronavirus.aspx](#)) pandemic can wear anyone down, but teens ([/English/health-issues/conditions/chest-lungs/Pages/Teens-and-COVID-19.aspx](#)) may have an especially tough time coping emotionally. Feeling depressed ([/English/ages-stages/teen/Pages/Mental-Health-and-Teens-Watch-for-Danger-Signs.aspx](#)), hopeless, anxious ([/English/health-issues/conditions/emotional-problems/Pages/Anxiety-Disorders.aspx](#)), or angry during the COVID-19 pandemic may be signs they need more support during this difficult time.



How your pediatrician can help

Staying in touch ([/English/tips-tools/ask-the-pediatrician/Pages/Is-it-OK-to-call-the-pediatrician-during-COVID-19-even-if-Im-not-sure-my-child-is-sick.aspx](#)) with your pediatrician is more important than ever during this pandemic. But it might not mean you need to go into the office for your teen to be seen. If you're concerned, ask your pediatrician's office about checking in on your teen's social and emotional health through a telehealth visit.

Pediatricians can screen ([/English/news/Pages/AAP-Publishes-Teen-Depression-Guidelines.aspx](#)) for depression and ask about other concerns like anxiety or trouble coping with stress. The doctor may also ask about these symptoms in other family members, as this can impact your teen's health, and whether they know anyone who has become sick with COVID-19. It's important to offer your teen some privacy to talk with the pediatrician during the visit to ensure they have the chance to speak as openly as possible.

A word about suicide risk in teens

Not everyone who considers suicide will talk about it, and not everyone who talks about suicide will act on their words. However, any talk about suicide should be taken seriously. **If you are worried about your teen, it is critical to make your home safe by removing weapons and ammunition from the house and securing medications in a locked cabinet.**

Seek help immediately by calling the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK or texting the Crisis Text Line by texting "TALK" to 741741.

Reserve 911 ([/English/health-issues/injuries-emergencies/Pages/Calling-911-How-and-When-to-Call-for-Help.aspx](#)) for situations where self-harming actions are happening or are about to happen. In a non-crisis situation, talk with your pediatrician about any concerns you have about your teen's mental health.

How is your teen coping during COVID-19?

Check in with your teen often to discuss how they're feeling and managing, and watch for signs ([/English/health-issues/conditions/emotional-problems/Pages/Childhood-Depression-What-Parents-Can-Do-To-Help.aspx](#)) of mental health struggles. Keep in mind that these signs are not the same for everyone; different people show different signs when trying to deal with mental health challenges.

It's normal for teens to feel sad during this time, crying sometimes because they miss their friends or because sports and musical productions were cancelled. However, your teen likely could benefit from extra support if they have:

- changes in mood that are not usual for your child, such as ongoing irritability, feelings of hopelessness or

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and frequent conflicts with friends and family.

- changes in behavior, such as stepping back from personal relationships. If your ordinarily outgoing teen shows little interest in texting or video chatting with their friends while stuck at home, for example, this might be cause for concern.
- a lack of interest in activities previously enjoyed. Did your music-loving child suddenly stop wanting to practice guitar, for example? Did your aspiring chef lose all interest in cooking and baking?
- a hard time falling or staying asleep, or starting to sleep all the time.
- changes in weight or eating patterns, such as never being hungry or eating all the time.
- problems with memory, thinking, or concentration.
- changes in appearance, such as lack of basic personal hygiene (within reason, since many are doing slightly less grooming during this time at home.)
- an increase in risky or reckless behaviors, such as using drugs or alcohol.
- thoughts about death or suicide (</English/health-issues/conditions/emotional-problems/Pages/Ten-Things-Parents-Can-Do-to-Prevent-Suicide.aspx>), or talking about it (see "A word about suicide risk in teens," above).

Remember

Parents set the tone in the household. Expressing extreme doom or fear can affect teens. Try to stay positive and relay consistent messages that a brighter future lies ahead. Keep lines of communication open between you and your teen, and don't hesitate to talk with your pediatrician about ways to help maintain your family's mental health during this difficult time.

More information

- [Teens & COVID-19: Challenges and Opportunities During the Outbreak \(/English/health-issues/conditions/chest-lungs/Pages/Teens-and-COVID-19.aspx\)](/English/health-issues/conditions/chest-lungs/Pages/Teens-and-COVID-19.aspx)
- [Ten Things Parents Can Do to Prevent Suicide \(/English/health-issues/conditions/emotional-problems/Pages/Ten-Things-Parents-Can-Do-to-Prevent-Suicide.aspx\)](/English/health-issues/conditions/emotional-problems/Pages/Ten-Things-Parents-Can-Do-to-Prevent-Suicide.aspx)
- [Mental Health and Teens: Watch for Danger Signs \(/English/ages-stages/teen/pages/Mental-Health-and-Teens-Watch-for-Danger-Signs.aspx\)](/English/ages-stages/teen/pages/Mental-Health-and-Teens-Watch-for-Danger-Signs.aspx)
- [American Foundation for Suicide Prevention: Teens and Suicide, What Parents Should Know \(https://afsp.org/teens-and-suicide-what-parents-should-know\)](https://afsp.org/teens-and-suicide-what-parents-should-know)

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