



Support for teens and young adults with substance use disorder

Recognizing possible signs and symptoms of substance use may help your teen or young adult get the treatment they may need.

How does substance use affect teens?

Substance use disorder involves excessive and compulsive use of alcohol, drugs or medications. It's a condition that may be treatable—and with resources, many people can recover and live healthier lives.

Teens and young adults may begin using substances for many reasons—from peer pressure to curiosity to coping with depression or anxiety. Because substance use may lead to addiction, it's important to get ahead of the problem before it gets worse.

What are the common signs of concern?

Recognizing signs of substance use may help your teen get the treatment they need. Signs may differ depending on the substance used, but the most common may include:

- Changes in relationships or hanging out with a new crowd
- Avoiding eye contact, locking doors, having secret phone calls
- Disappearing for hours or days at a time
- Unexplained mood swings
- Ignoring responsibilities, like skipping school
- Missing and/or hidden alcohol, pills, cash or possessions

continued

3M+

youth (ages 12–17) reported using illicit drugs in 2020¹

12

is the average age for trying alcohol for the first time²

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What can you do to help a loved one?

If you're worried about someone you're close to, it's important to be supportive.

Express your concern

Explain the reasons why you have concerns, making sure they don't feel accused or shamed. It's important to remain calm—even if they may get upset with you—and remind them how much you care about them.³

Seek outside help and education

Call your primary care provider, behavioral health specialist, school nurse or guidance counselor. Joining a support group may help you learn ways to take care of yourself and better understand your loved one's substance use.

Learn about your options

Check with your loved one's health plan benefits to understand options, programs and resources that may be available to them.

UnitedHealthcare members and their covered family members have access to resources to help recover from substance use disorder. Sign in to myuhc.com[®] for self-help digital tools and guidance to finding the right licensed therapist for you (including in-person and virtual appointments).

Hope and healing may be a phone call away

To connect with specialists trained in addressing substance use disorders, call the Substance Use Helpline at 1-855-780-5955. It's confidential and available 24/7.

If you or someone you know is experiencing thoughts of suicide, call 911 or the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 988.

Learn more

Visit uhc.com/parentyouth to see available resources including our conversation starter cards

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¹ Key Substance Use and Mental Health Indicators in the United States: Results from the 2020 National Survey on Drug Use and Health. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Published October 2021. Accessed June 2022. www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/reports/rpt35325/NSDUHFFR1PDFWHTMLFiles2020/2020NSDUHFFR1PDFW102121.pdf.

² Teens: Alcohol and other drugs. National Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. Published March 2018. Accessed June 2022. www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Facts_for_Families/FFF-Guide/Teens-Alcohol-And-Other-Drugs-003.aspx.

³ Talking to your child when you suspect drug use. Drug Enforcement Administration. Published November 2021. Accessed June 2022. www.getsmartaboutdrugs.gov/content/talking-your-child-when-you-suspect-drug-use.

All UnitedHealthcare members can access a cost estimate online or on the mobile app. None of the cost estimates are intended to be a guarantee of your costs or benefits. Your actual costs may vary. When accessing a cost estimate, please refer to the Website or Mobile application terms of use under Find Care & Costs section.

This program should not be used for emergency or urgent care needs. In an emergency, call 911 if you are in the United States or the local emergency services phone number if you are outside the United States, or go to the nearest accident and emergency department. This program is not a substitute for a doctor's or professional's care. Due to the potential for a conflict of interest, legal consultation will not be provided on issues that may involve legal action against Optum or its affiliates, or any entity through which the caller is receiving these services directly or indirectly (e.g., employer or health plan). This program and all its components, in particular services to family members below the age of 16, may not be available in all locations and are subject to change without prior notice. Coverage exclusions and limitations may apply.

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