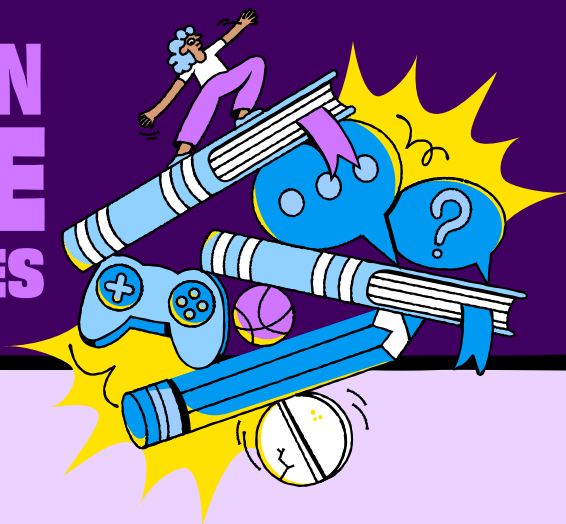


THE CONNECTION BETWEEN TEEN DRUG USE AND MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES



The number of teens reporting poor mental health has increased over the past decade.¹

40% of high school students in 2023 stopped regular activities because of persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness.¹



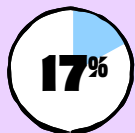
The same study found that among high school students in the last 30 days:



29% reported experiencing poor mental health.



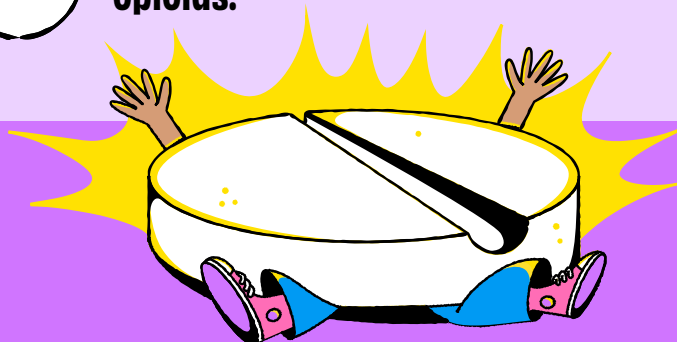
22% drank alcohol.



17% used marijuana.



4% misused prescription opioids.¹



Linking Substance Use and Mental Health Challenges

Teens may use alcohol and other substances to help them cope with mental health challenges, like stress, anxiety, and depression. Over time, this ongoing use can lead to a substance use disorder (SUD).²

Mental health conditions and SUDs are often *co-occurring*. This means that if a teen has an SUD, they are more likely to have a mental health condition. The reverse is also true: teens with a mental health condition are more likely to use substances.³

A 2023 SURVEY FOUND:

Teens ages 12–17 who had a major depressive episode in the past year were more likely than their peers to:



Use illegal drugs, marijuana, and tobacco products.



Misuse prescription opioids.

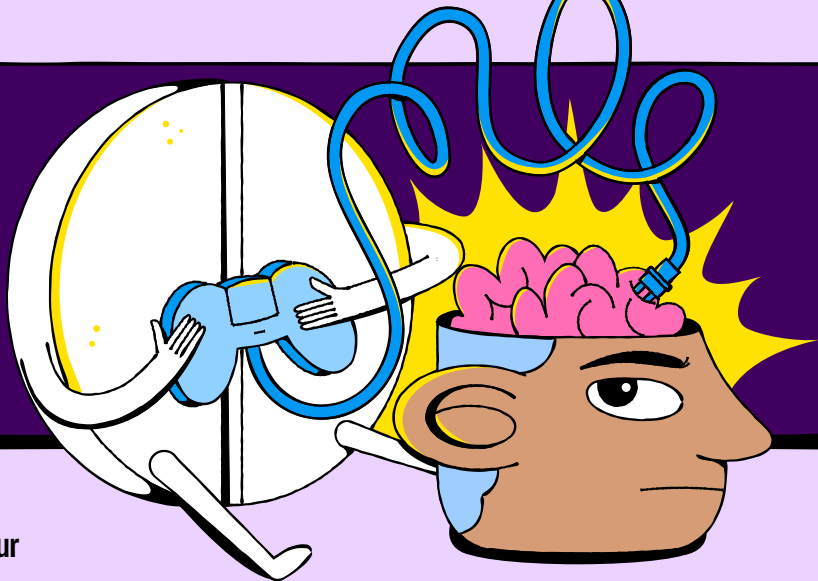


Binge drink alcohol.⁴

**FREE
MIND**



WHAT PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS CAN DO



These facts and figures can be scary to read as a parent or caregiver. However, there are steps you can take to protect your teen and prevent them from experiencing these issues.

Protective factors like positive relationships, strong self-esteem, and effective coping skills can help teens stay healthy.¹ Supporting these factors is an important step in preventing teen substance use and addressing mental health challenges.

Here are a Few Strategies to Help You Get Started:

- 1 Talk openly with your teen** about substance use and mental health. Start the conversation now and keep it going. Honest and empathetic communication can help teens feel more comfortable coming to you when they have questions or need help.
- 2 Educate yourself** about these issues through resources like the ones below. Having a strong knowledge base will help you handle tough questions. It can also help you find a list of reliable resources to share with your teen.
- 3 Seek early treatment** for your teen if they are experiencing an SUD or mental health condition. Early treatment can make all the difference. Treatment for SUDs and mental health conditions can include counseling, rehabilitation and treatment programs, medications, and support groups for both teens and their families.⁶

What are SUDs and Mental health Conditions?

Substance Use Disorder (SUD):

occurs when a person repeatedly uses alcohol, drugs, or both, causing problems in daily life. This can include health problems and failure to meet major responsibilities at school, work, or home.⁵

Mental Health Conditions:

such as anxiety, involve serious changes in thinking, mood, behavior, or any combination of the three that cause distress and problems. These conditions can affect teens' decision-making and how they relate to others.³ If symptoms are serious, persistent, and interfere with daily life, a formal mental health diagnosis may be necessary.⁵

LEARN MORE:



To learn more about teen substance use and mental health, including SUDs and mental health conditions, visit [cdc.gov/freemind](https://www.cdc.gov/freemind).

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