

Behavior & Mental Health

Risky behaviors and their negative consequences are preventable. For teens, the most serious health issues are not caused by disease but from their behaviors, experiences and feelings.

How does the medical provider help your teen stay safe?

It is important that your teen gets one-on-one time with their medical provider. During this time, they talk about different areas of their lives and help them identify thoughts or behaviors that pose a risk to health.

Safety

Risky behaviors cause 3 out of every 4 teen deaths. Teens are more likely to engage in risk-taking behaviors and taking precautions should be encouraged. Strategies include always wearing a seat belt when in cars and always wearing a helmet when playing sports or participating in outdoor activities. Your teen's medical provider also looks at the chances of your teen being at high risk for bullying and online safety. Other areas of teen safety that warrant attention from the provider are dating and gun violence, safe sex and water safety.

Mental Health

Genetics, environment and lifestyle affect whether someone develops a mental health condition. Half of all chronic mental illness begins by age 14. Research shows that almost half of the people who die by suicide had a known mental health condition. Checking for mental health conditions during the teen years is important. Possible issues commonly screened for are:

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Suicidal thoughts
- Suicidal attempt

If you have concerns about your teen and suicide, call the National hotline at 1-800-273-8255

Substance Use

Alcohol, tobacco and marijuana are the drugs most commonly abused by teens. By the 12th grade, about 2 in 3 students will have tried alcohol. Drug & alcohol use by teens can have a big impact on their health and well-being. Research shows that the earlier a person begins to use drugs, the more likely it is to become a serious issue. During the one-on-one visit with their medical provider, teens are screened for:

- Prescription drug misuse
- Marijuana use
- Vaping & cigarette use
- Alcohol use
- Illegal drugs

Possible areas for discussion:

- Trauma
- Support systems
- Unhealthy relationships
- Goals for the future

