

Mental health and teenagers



Mental health and wellbeing impacts all of us, including young adults and teenagers. Half of the mental health conditions that we may experience throughout our lifetime begin before the age of 14, so it's important that young people have support and resources available to them to help recognise mental health issues and how to manage them.

Mental health in teenagers – a snapshot



75% of mental health problems emerge before the age of 25



Major depressive disorders are more common in young people than children



Almost 1 in 5 of young people aged 11 to 17 experience high or very high levels of psychological distress at some stage



1 in 10 young people aged 12 – 17 years old will self-harm



Young people are less likely than any other age group to seek professional help

What are the signs to look out for?

While being a teenager is an exciting time, it can also be a challenging time. Teenagers are dealing with many issues - changing bodies, increased hormones, pressure to complete schoolwork and extracurricular activities, finding their identity, managing friendships starting to make decisions about their career path, first jobs, first relationships and learning to drive.

There is a lot of change in a relatively small period for a teenager. Mood swings, behavioural changes, difficulty sleeping, and a lack of motivation can all be normal, but how do you know if it's part of being a teenager, or a sign of a potential mental health issue?

Here are a few of the signs to keep an eye out for:

- 1 They are sad, have a low mood or lack motivation for extended periods of time.

- 2 They seem overwhelmed by everyday activities.

- 3 They have a sudden change in their grades at school, or refuse to attend school at all.

- 4 Their appetite changes or they have trouble eating.

- 5 They are overly sensitive or anxious about their weight and appearance, and/or they lose weight or stop gaining weight as they grow.





- 6 They have trouble sleeping for an extended period.

- 7 They do not want to see friends or avoid other social contact.

- 8 They have continuous complaints of physical pain including headaches or stomach aches.

How to support mental health and wellbeing in young people

Whether you're a friend, parent, sibling, carer or family member, there are many ways you can support the mental health and wellbeing of the young people and teenagers in your life.

	<p>Talk to them</p> <p>This shows them that you care and that they can talk to you about how they're feeling. Remind them that everyone has problems at different points in their life, and that it's easier to work through with someone else.</p>		<p>Seek professional help</p> <p>This can be a daunting step, but very important. Tell them that you're worried about them and that you would like them to speak to a professional for support (remind them that professional help is confidential). They may say that nothing is wrong and refuse to come with you – you can go your own to seek advice in the first instance and invite them to come next time.</p>
	<p>Show them that you're there for them</p> <p>Remind them they can talk to you, check in on them, invite them to participate in activities with you. These are all reminders that you love and support them and that they are not alone.</p>		<p>Remind them of their support network</p> <p>Your loved one may not feel comfortable talking about their feelings with you. Don't take this personally. Instead, remind them of the other people in their lives that they may feel more comfortable talking to – a friend, a sibling, a parent, a teacher, a close relative like an aunt or an uncle.</p>

This can be a stressful and confusing time in the lives of young people and having people around who care for them and are ready to assist them is an important part of helping them to seek help if and when they need it.