



# Support for teens and young adults with substance use disorder



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

## What is substance use disorder?

Substance use disorder involves excessive and compulsive use of alcohol, drugs or medications. It's a disease—and it is treatable. Many people can recover if they seek the proper care.

## Substance use during the teen years

Substance use in the teen years can start for many reasons. It might begin with peer pressure. Some may use substances to mask depression or anxiety. Others may just want to see what it's like to use drugs or alcohol. Some people may begin using more often and become addicted—physically, mentally or both.

## What are the common signs of concern?

Recognizing signs of substance use may help you help your loved one get the treatment they need. Signs may differ depending on the substance used, but the most common flags 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

# 4M+

youth (ages 12–17) reported using illicit drugs in 2018<sup>1</sup>

# 12

is the average age for trying alcohol for the first time<sup>2</sup>

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## What can I do to help a loved one?

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

### Tell them you're concerned

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

### 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 help 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.



## Hope and healing may be a phone call away

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

If you or someone you know are experiencing thoughts of suicide or something else that is urgent or an emergency, call 911 or the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255).

## Find a provider

Sign in to or register on [myuhc.com](https://myuhc.com)<sup>®</sup> and go to **Find Care & Costs > Behavioral Health Directory**, or call the phone number on your health plan ID card

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<sup>1</sup> Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Results from the 2018 national survey on drug use and health: Detailed tables.

<sup>2</sup> National Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. Teens: Alcohol and other drugs.

<sup>3</sup> Drug Enforcement Administration. Talking to 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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