

## Adolescent brain development and vulnerability to addiction

Adolescence is a critical period for the onset of substance use and its potentially debilitating consequences for two reasons:

- The regions of the brain that are critical to decision making, judgment, impulse control, emotion, and memory are not yet fully developed in adolescence, making teens more prone than adults to taking risks, including experimenting with tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs.
- Because the teen brain is still developing, addictive substances physically alter its structure and function faster and more intensely than in adults, interfering with brain development, further impairing judgment, and heightening the risk of addiction.

The science of addiction and evidence of its consequences are clear enough to conclude that there is no safe level of use of addictive substances by teens.

*(Adolescent Substance Use: America's #1 Public Health Problem, The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, 2011)*

### ABOUT ROSECRANCE




Rosecrance is a national leader in addiction and mental health treatment. The non-profit organization provides residential and outpatient services and recovery living settings in Illinois, Wisconsin, and Iowa. Rosecrance served more than 45,000 individuals at over 60 locations last year furthering its mission to provide help, hope, and lasting recovery to children, youth, adults, and families. The organization was founded in 1916.

To learn more about Rosecrance and view our facilities, visit [rosecrance.org](http://rosecrance.org).

To schedule an appointment or to make a referral, please contact us at: **815.391.1000 or 888.928.5278 (toll free) or [info@rosecrance.org](mailto:info@rosecrance.org)**.

Rosecrance is accredited by The Joint Commission, licensed and partially funded by the Illinois Department of Human Services/Division of Alcoholism & Substance Abuse, a certified Medicaid provider and approved by most insurance companies.

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-  [rosecrance.org](http://rosecrance.org)
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ADOLESCENT SUBSTANCE ABUSE

## Is my child using drugs? What can I do?



rosecrance  
life's waiting®

## Is my child using drugs? What can I do?

This isn't easy. You are concerned that your teen may be using drugs. You have lots of questions and want to make the right decision. Rosecrance can help.

### Does my child need help?

At this point, you are not sure. You may think they are going through a phase or just experimenting. Making it more difficult, they are probably telling you they don't have a problem at all.

You want to believe your child and give them the benefit of the doubt. It's easy to second guess yourself. All parents go through this.

Substance use can be a sign of underlying mental health issues as well. It is important to distinguish whether the presenting symptoms are being caused by substances or if they are related to other mental health issues. It can be difficult to tell because these symptoms can appear similarly.

If there is any question in your mind, it makes sense to have a professional evaluation. You'll get the answers you need so you, your child, and your family can live a healthy life.

Rosecrance provides free, confidential consultations and educational/prevention services to help teens and their families during this time.


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### How do I set up an evaluation?

Call **815.391.1000** or **888.928.5278 (toll-free)** to arrange a free consultation. A Rosecrance counselor will assess various areas of your teen's life, as well as drug/alcohol use and mental health issues. The counselor will recommend the best level of care for your child.

*Rosecrance accepts most insurance plans.*

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The best way for a parent or loved one to be an ally for a teen is to stay informed.

**We can help.**

For more information on teen behavioral health, visit [rosecrance.org/resources-parents/](https://www.rosecrance.org/resources-parents/)

## What signs or symptoms should I look for?

### Physical/Emotional

- Unexplained extreme mood swings
- Tired with noticeable change in sleep patterns
- Dilated pupils and bloodshot eyes
- Loss of appetite, yet periods of binge eating
- Changes in dress or appearance
- Threatens/attempts to commit suicide
- Uncharacteristic nosebleeds or unexplained burns

### Social

- Changes in friends, including secret calls and visits
- Avoids contact with concerned persons
- Loses interest in hobbies/activities
- Becomes secretive and defensive regarding actions
- Reluctant to introduce new friends

### Family/Home

- Ignores curfews and other house rules
- Withdraws from family activities
- Isolates from family members and is rarely home
- Tells lies or gives unrealistic explanations to parents
- Uses air fresheners or breath mints to cover scents
- Evidence of vaping/current marijuana products (ie. finding mysterious pen or flash drive-shaped objects, unfamiliar chargers plugged into usb/outlets, empty cartridges, waxes, fruity smells)

### School

- Misses excessive time from school
- Fails to turn in assignments
- Sleeps in class
- Exhibits persistent behavioral problems
- Reduced grades
- Increased tardiness
- Reduced interest in extracurricular activities

### Financial

- Steals money or objects from family and friends
- Develops unexplained shortages of money
- Loss of possessions
- Increased amounts of alcohol missing in home
- No tangible evidence of how money is spent such as clothes, music, or other items
- Excess money beyond explanation may mean teen is dealing drugs

### Legal

- Runs away from home
- Increased involvement with police, such as having parties/social functions broken up by the police
- Arrested for alcohol or other drug-related charges