



## **Is it Substance Abuse, Is It Mental Health, or Is It Both? Co-Occurring Disorder**

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Mental health problems and substance use disorders sometimes occur together. This is because:

- Certain substances can cause people with an addiction to experience one or more symptoms of a mental health problem
- Mental health problems can sometimes lead to alcohol or drug use, as some people with a mental health problem may misuse these substances as a form of self-medication
- Mental health and substance use disorders share some underlying causes, including changes in brain composition, genetic vulnerabilities, and early exposure to stress or trauma

More than one in four adults living with serious mental health problems also has a substance use problem. Substance use problems occur more frequently with certain mental health problems, including:

- [Depression](#)
- [Anxiety Disorders](#)
- [Schizophrenia](#)
- [Personality Disorder](#)

## **Substance Use Disorders**

### ***Symptoms***

It can be hard to identify a substance use disorder sometimes because people can have a wide degree of functioning and often can hide their alcohol or drug use. Symptoms of substance use disorders may include behavioral changes, such as:

- Drop in attendance and performance at work or school
- Frequently getting into trouble (fights, accidents, illegal activities)
- Engaging in secretive or suspicious behaviors
- Changes in appetite or sleep patterns
- Unexplained change in personality or attitude
- Sudden mood swings, irritability, or angry outbursts
- Periods of unusual hyperactivity, agitation, or giddiness
- Lack of motivation
- Appearing fearful, anxious, or paranoid, with no reason

### ***Physical changes, such as:***

- Bloodshot eyes and abnormally sized pupils
- Sudden weight loss or weight gain
- Deterioration of physical appearance
- Unusual smells on breath, body, or clothing
- Tremors, slurred speech, or impaired coordination

### ***Social changes, such as:***

- Sudden change in friends, favorite hangouts, and hobbies
- Legal problems related to substance use

- Unexplained need for money or financial problems
- Using substances even though it causes problems in relationships

### ***Recovering From Mental Health Problems and Substance Use***

Someone with a mental health problem and substance use disorder must treat both issues. Treatment for both mental health problems and substance use disorders may include rehabilitation, medications, support groups, and talk therapy.

This information was provided by the SAMHSA website:

<https://www.samhsa.gov/mental-health/mental-health-substance-use-co-occurring-disorders>

## **Common Mental Health Disorders in Adolescence**

Common mental health disorders in adolescence include those related to anxiety, depression, attention deficit-hyperactivity, and eating.

### ***Anxiety disorders***

- Characterized by feelings of excessive uneasiness, worry, and fear
- Examples include generalized anxiety disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, social anxiety disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and phobias
- Occur in approximately 32 percent of 13- to 18-year-olds
- In 2016, roughly 11 percent of adolescents ages 12-17 and 7 percent of children ages 6-11 had a current anxiety disorder diagnosis
- Globally, the prevalence of youth experiencing clinically elevated anxiety symptoms, roughly 1 in 5, nearly doubled during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, underscoring the importance of mental health supports and services for adolescents

### ***Depression***

- Depressed mood that affects thoughts, feelings, and daily activities, including eating, sleeping, and working
- Occurs in approximately 13 percent of 12- to 17-year-olds<sup>9</sup>
- Examples include major depressive disorder and seasonal affective disorder

### ***Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)***

- Characterized by continued inattention and/or hyperactivity-impulsivity that interferes with daily functioning or development
- Occurs in approximately nine percent of 13- to 18-year-olds

## ***Eating disorders***

- Characterized by extreme and abnormal eating behaviors, such as restricted or excessive eating
- Occur in almost three percent of 13- to 18-year-olds
- Examples include anorexia nervosa, bulimia, and binge eating disorder

Information provided by the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services website:

<https://opa.hhs.gov/adolescent-health/mental-health-adolescents#:~:text=Common%20mental%20health%20disorders%20in%20adolescence%20include%20those%20related%20to,deficit%2Dhyperactivity%2C%20and%20eating>