

How Do Mental Health Screenings Help Teens?

Screening provides a simple and effective way to identify mental health problems in their early, easier-to-treat stages. Effective treatment has been shown to improve both mental and physical well-being. In addition, treatment for mental health problems can improve school performance, and communication and interactions with family members and peers. Treatment can also help to reduce school suspensions and expulsions, prevent substance abuse disorders, and reduce the risk of suicidal thoughts or attempts.

Is Mental Health Screening Effective and Safe?

Numerous studies and reports have shown that adolescent mental health screening is more accurate than an informal discussion with the primary care provider. When not using a screening questionnaire, providers may miss up to 50% of all adolescent mental health problems.

Research has also shown that most teens are receptive to mental health screening and open to discussing the results.

What Do the Results Mean?

Your teenager will score either positive or negative on the questionnaire. A negative result means that the screening has indicated no mental health issues at that time. A positive score means that the questionnaire has revealed potential areas of concern. Your health care professional may recommend a comprehensive mental health evaluation to make a definitive diagnosis and determine the best course of action.

How Often Does a Teen Need to be Screened?

The American Academy of Pediatrics, the Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine, and the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force recommend that teens ages 12-18 take a mental health screening at least once a year.

Does Insurance Cover Adolescent Mental Health Screenings?

Under the new federal health care law, an adolescent mental health screening is a free preventive service. Insurance companies are mandated to cover the service without passing on any additional co-pays to you.