

## 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 level of safe 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 leading provider of treatment services for individuals with substance use and mental health disorders. More than 16,000 children, teens, adults and families receive help each year.

Rosecrance offers addiction treatment through inpatient programs in Rockford, IL, and outpatient services in Rockford, Crystal Lake and McHenry, IL and Waukesha County, WI, and six satellite offices in the Chicago area. Rosecrance offers inpatient/outpatient mental health treatment services in Rockford, IL, and outpatient services in Belvidere, Crystal Lake and McHenry, IL.

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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National Association of  
Addiction Treatment Providers



Accredited by  
The Joint Commission

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A United Way  
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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 he/she is going through a phase or just experimenting. Making it more difficult, your child is telling you he/she doesn't have a problem at all.

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

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 go on with 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 and/or alcohol use. The counselor will recommend the best level of care for your child.

*Rosecrance works with 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.

## 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
- Collects alcohol and other drug paraphernalia
- Tells lies or gives unrealistic explanations to parents
- Uses air fresheners or breath mints to cover scents

### 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