

Depression Rates Triple for Teen Girls

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August 2, 2012 — The number of major depressive episodes (MDEs) increases dramatically as adolescent girls enter puberty, according to a new report.

According to the 2008 to 2010 National Surveys on Drug Use and Health, which are sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), approximately 12% of all girls in the United States between 12 and 17 years of age experienced an MDE in the past year compared with only 4.5% of boys between the same ages.

In addition, 5.1% of the girls experienced past-year MDEs at the age of 12 years vs 15.2% who experienced the episodes at the age of 15 years.

However, only 32.4% of the 12-year-old girls who experienced an MDE and only 42% of the 15-year-olds received treatment.

"It is crucial that we provide adolescent girls the coping skills and social supports they need to avoid the onset of depression and to offer behavioral health services that foster resilience and recovery if they experience it," Pamela S. Hyde, SAMSHA administrator, said in a release.

"These efforts are a sound investment in girls' health and well-being, and in our nation's future," added Hyde.

The report was released July 19 and is available on SAMSHA's Web site.

Targeted Prevention Needed

For the surveys, MDE was defined as depression lasting for 2 weeks or longer, as specified in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition*.

Other findings from the surveys indicate that the number of past-year MDEs experienced increased every year for the girls between the ages of 12 and 16 years, but then tapered between the ages of 16 and 17 years.

Table: Percentage of Girls Experiencing Past-Year MDEs

Age (Years)	Percentage Experiencing MDEs
12	5.1
13	8.5
14	11.6
15	15.2
16	16.1
17	14.6

"Given the young age at which MDE begins to increase among girls, prevention and intervention efforts targeting adolescents in middle school may help ameliorate depression onset, as well as reduce depression recurrence through the life course," write the report authors.

They note that a 43-page booklet on "developing core competencies for mental health and substance abuse service professionals" for treating these adolescent girls' needs is available for free on their Web site.

In addition, the Child Mental Health Initiative program provides information on services available to family members, teachers, coaches, and other concerned adults.

Data Spotlight: National Survey on Drug Use and Health. Published July 19, 2012. Full article

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