

ADOLESCENT AND YOUTH PSYCHOSOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT AND THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Adolescence is a unique developmental period characterized by profound biological, cognitive, emotional, and social development.

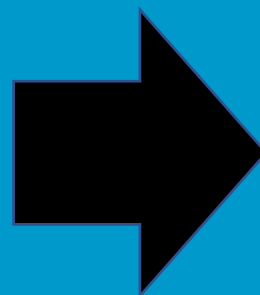
- **Early adolescence (10–14 years) is characterized by rapid biological transformations, including hormonal changes and the introduction of the capacity to reproduce.**
- **Late adolescence (15–19 years) is typified by pubertal maturation and progressive adoption of more adult roles and functions, where young people acquire or consolidate the social, cultural, emotional, educational, and economic resources for life.**

BRAIN DEVELOPMENT DURING ADOLESCENCE AND YOUNG ADULTHOOD

- During adolescence and into young adulthood, brain development focuses on increasing the efficiency of the brain.
- During this time, connections between brain regions become stronger and more efficient, and weak and irrelevant connections are pruned away.
- This process of brain maturation allows young people to learn and adapt to changes and build new relationships with those around them.
- Chronic stress may have a direct impact on the development and structure of the adolescent brain.
- A secure and stable social environment is important for optimal development of the brain functions needed for longevity and for social and emotional wellness into adulthood

BRAIN DEVELOPMENT DURING ADOLESCENCE AND YOUNG ADULTHOOD AND THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

- Chronic stress
- A changed social environment



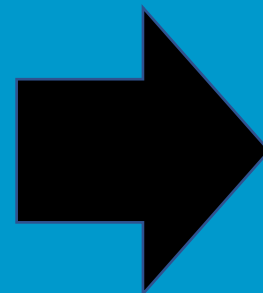
Potential long-term effects on Neurochemistry and structural brain development

PSYCHOSOCIAL DEVELOPMENT DURING ADOLESCENCE

- **Progressive development of abstract thinking**
- **Expansion of the social world and development of relationships outside of the immediate family**
- **Attachment needs shift away from parents and toward friends and romantic partners .**
- **Increased identification with peers**
- **Increased sensitivity to social belonging and peer social approval**
- **Definition of identity**

ADOLESCENT PSYCHOSOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

**Limited social
interactions
School closures
Insecurity
Fear**



**Curtailed
psychosocial
development**

PROMOTE AND SUPPORT HEALTHY PSYCHOSOCIAL DEVELOPMENT (1)

- Provide reliable and accurate information to adolescents regarding puberty.
- Provide access to academic and other learning opportunities, such as online training opportunities, learning a new skill (e.g., music, art, new language), or taking up a new hobby.
- Parents, governments, and communities should pursue optimal return to school of students when schools are reopening, particularly for girls in vulnerable communities who may be at greater risk to dropout.

PROMOTE AND SUPPORT HEALTHY PSYCHOSOCIAL DEVELOPMENT (2)

- Support young people to build safe supportive relationships with their peers, maximizing the benefits of social media platforms for socializing (e.g., online parties).
- Encourage and support young people to become involved in their communities through identification of opportunities to safely engage with volunteering and helping others.
- Promote and support healthy lifestyles during the pandemic.
- Manage the use of social media by adolescents: maximize the benefits and minimize the risks/harm.

PARENTING ADOLESCENTS DURING AND FOLLOWING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

- **Adolescents confined to their homes have more interactions with parents, at an age when they would normally be seeking interactions outside of the home.**
 - **This can contribute to increased positive parental involvement, or can exacerbate a crisis**
 - **Worst case scenario: being near their abusers for extended periods**
- **Supporting parents and parenting during the COVID-19 pandemic is essential:**
 - **Dealing with their own sense of loss of control and challenges**
 - **Taking on new/additional roles**

Thank you

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BE AWARE. PREPARE. ACT.

www.paho.org/coronavirus