



**Mitigating the Direct and Indirect  
Consequences of COVID-19 on the  
Health and Well-Being of Young  
People in the Americas**

## **Young people's mental health**

**Renato Oliveira e Souza**

Unit Chief

Mental Health and Substance Use Unit  
PAHO/WHO

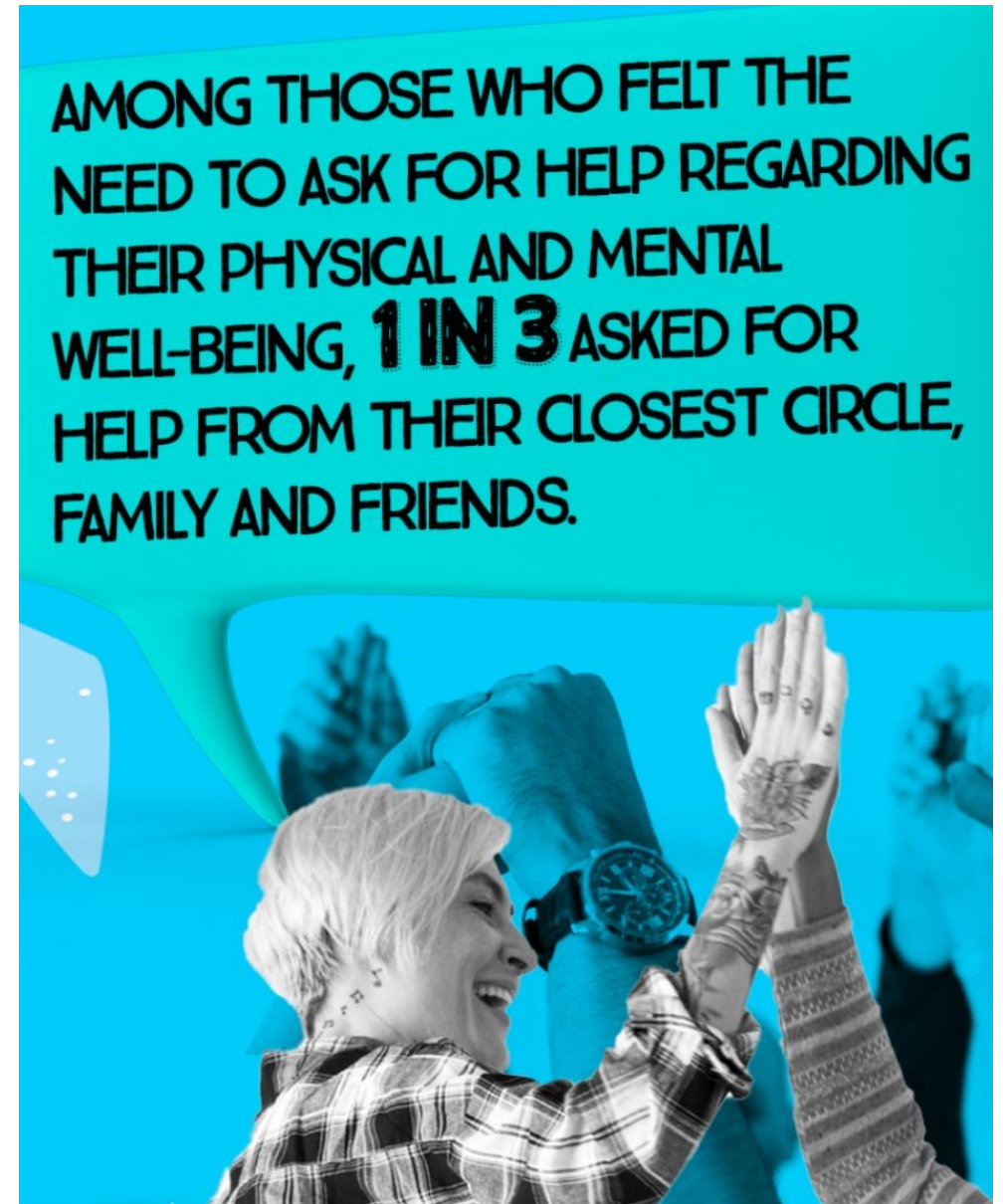
**PAHO**



Pan American  
Health  
Organization



World Health  
Organization  
REGIONAL OFFICE FOR THE  
Americas



## Percentage of substance using adolescents and mean number of substance-using days in the 3 weeks before versus 3 weeks into the COVID-19 pandemic

	Total sample ( $n = 1,054$ )		
	Pre-COVID-19	During COVID-19	$p$ -value
Substance users, % ( $n$ )			
Alcohol	28.6 (301)	30.4 (320)	.23
Binge drinking	<b>15.7 (165)</b>	<b>9.8 (103)</b>	.00
Cannabis	<b>17.0 (179)</b>	<b>13.8 (145)</b>	.00
Vaping	<b>16.6 (175)</b>	<b>11.5 (121)</b>	.00
Number of substance-using days, M(SD)			
Alcohol	<b>.76 (1.77)</b>	<b>.96 (2.14)</b>	.02
Binge drinking	.41 (1.41)	.33 (1.34)	.25
Cannabis	<b>.94 (3.28)</b>	<b>1.10 (3.76)</b>	.01
Vaping	1.59 (4.81)	1.30 (4.48)	.49



# Address young people's mental health

- The response must include timely diagnosis and treatment, as well as promotive and preventive measures.
- Psychological, behavioral, or social approaches contribute to positive mental health, reduction of mental disorders, self-harm, suicide, and risky behaviors.
- It is possible to implement these interventions through digital platforms, in schools, communities and health centers.






# School Mental Health Literacy Training to Address Rise in COVID-19 Related Mental Health Issues

- Enhance the understanding about mental health and mental disorders and to reduce stigma against mental illness
- Helping to build the capacity to obtain and maintain good mental health; including linking adolescents with appropriate referral services



# HELPING ADOLESCENTS THRIVE



AIM: Improve evidence-based programming for psychosocial interventions for promotion of mental health and prevention of mental disorders, self-harm and other risk behaviors in adolescents.



# HELPING ADOLESCENTS THRIVE

## Multi-sectoral collaboration



**1** Implementation and enforcement of laws and policies



**2** Environments to promote and protect adolescent mental health



**3** Caregiver support



**4** Adolescent psychosocial interventions

## Monitoring and evaluation

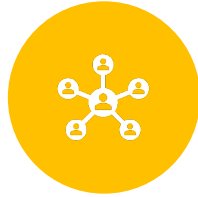
# Summary of tips for Youth during COVID



Recognize that  
your anxiety is  
completely  
normal.



Create  
distractions.



Find new ways  
to connect  
with your  
friends.



Focus on you.



Feel your  
feelings.



Be kind to  
yourself and  
others.





## COVID-19

COVID-19 AND YOUNG PEOPLE  
**PROTECT YOURSELF**

#COVID19 #ITHRIVE

- Young people are also at risk for severe sickness, hospitalization, and death from COVID-19.
- Don't risk your life. Stay home if you are asked to; meet up with friends online or by phone.
- Wash your hands and follow guidance from your local authorities.

PAHO BE AWARE. PREPARE. ACT. [www.paho.org/covid19](http://www.paho.org/covid19)

## COVID-19

COVID-19 AND YOUNG PEOPLE  
**MAINTAIN YOUR ROUTINE**

#COVID19 #ITHRIVE

- The COVID-19 situation is a stressful time for everyone, including young people.
- Maintaining a familiar routine – while still practicing physical distancing – can help you feel calmer and more in control.
- If you need help, don't hesitate to reach out to a trusted adult or professional.

PAHO BE AWARE. PREPARE. ACT. [www.paho.org/covid19](http://www.paho.org/covid19)

## COVID-19

COVID-19 AND YOUNG PEOPLE  
**PROTECT YOURSELF AND OTHERS**

#COVID19 #ITHRIVE

- Physical distancing can help protect you from COVID-19. Stay at home with members of your household if you're asked to. Meet up virtually with friends or other family members.
- Wash your hands often and well with soap and water or alcohol-based gel. Disinfect surfaces you touch a lot, like cell phones, computers, doorknobs, etc.
- Do not leave your house if you are sick. If you need medical care, call your healthcare provider or your local COVID-19 hotline.

PAHO BE AWARE. PREPARE. ACT. [www.paho.org/covid19](http://www.paho.org/covid19)

## COVID-19

COVID-19 AND YOUNG PEOPLE  
**PROTECT YOUR MENTAL HEALTH**

#COVID19 #ITHRIVE

- The COVID-19 situation is a stressful time for everyone, including young people. Chat with or videocall friends and family to stay connected.
- Limit how much social media and news you consume. Avoid rumors and misinformation by getting news from trusted sources.
- Exercise or meditate at home. Reach out to a trusted adult or professional if you need help.

PAHO BE AWARE. PREPARE. ACT. [www.paho.org/covid19](http://www.paho.org/covid19)

## COVID-19

COVID-19 AND YOUNG PEOPLE  
**PROTECT YOUR FAMILY**

#COVID19 #ITHRIVE

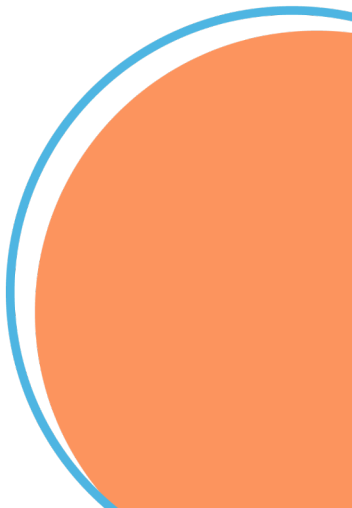
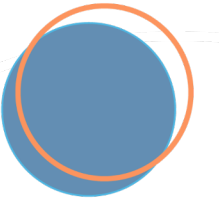
- Young people not only have a risk of getting extremely sick or dying of COVID-19, you can also spread the disease to people who have a high risk of dying, like grandparents, parents, and friends and family members with underlying health conditions.
- Physical distancing can help stop COVID-19. Stay at home with members of your household if you're asked to. Meet up virtually with friends or other family members. Protect yourself and your family.

PAHO BE AWARE. PREPARE. ACT. [www.paho.org/covid19](http://www.paho.org/covid19)



# Summary of tips for Parents and caregivers:

- Help young people to structure and plan their daily tasks and establish a routine.
- Help them keep to regular schedules as much as possible or help create new ones adapted to the current situation.
- Provide accurate information about what is going on with the pandemic and give them clear information.
- Be vigilant to pick up on signs of stress and anxiety, poor sleeping habits, anger, and inability to concentrate or complete tasks.





# Best Practice Statement regarding management of post-COVID condition

- All patients (and their caregivers) with COVID-19 should be counseled to monitor for resolution of signs and symptoms.
- Patients with severe and critical COVID-19 may develop post-intensive care syndrome (PICS), with a range of impairment including (but not limited to) mental health symptoms, physical and cognitive problems.
- National (local) coordinated care pathways should be established that can include primary care providers (i.e., general practitioners), relevant specialists, multidisciplinary rehabilitation professionals, mental health and psychosocial providers, and social care services.



WHO (2021) COVID-19 clinical management: living guidance,



# Summary



- Multiple studies have reported on the deterioration of the mental health of children and young people during the pandemic.
- A comprehensive response to the mental health of young people must include timely diagnosis and treatment, as well as promotive and preventive measures.
- It is essential to strengthen mental health services for youth and increase the investment in youth mental health actions.

**PAHO**

Pan American  
Health  
Organization

