Adolescent psychiatric disorders during the COVID-19 pandemic

Where does this information come from?

- A narrative literature review looked at the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown on adolescent psychiatric disorders.
- The review examined whether adolescents were at a higher risk of developing psychiatric disorders or if those with existing psychiatric disorders would experience worsening symptoms because of COVID-19.
- Articles reviewed included:
  - data on psychiatric disorders, with a focus on adolescents
  - the impact of pandemics, epidemics and disasters similar to crises such as SARS on adolescents' mental health.

Why should we focus on adolescent mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic?

- Adolescents are a vulnerable population group.
- The current pandemic and lockdown could put adolescents at a higher risk of developing psychiatric disorders or having worsening psychiatric symptoms.
- There is limited literature related to how epidemics or pandemics impact the mental health and well-being of adolescents.
- Adolescents are experiencing new worries such as illness, the potential loss of family members, the sudden disruption to their education, and lack of connection with their friends and peers.
- Spending more time on the internet and social media is associated with depression or anxiety symptoms.

What psychiatric disorders are adolescents at a high risk of?

Disorders that may begin due to the pandemic:
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Acute Stress
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
- Addictive Disorders

Pre-existing psychiatric disorders whose symptoms might worsen due to the pandemic:
- Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder
- Autism spectrum disorder
- Eating disorders
- Obsessive compulsive disorder

What factors are contributing to poor mental health outcomes?

- FAMILY VIOLENCE
- COVID-19 PANDEMIC
- SOCIAL MEDIA
- TRAUMATIC EVENTS
- ECONOMIC CRISIS
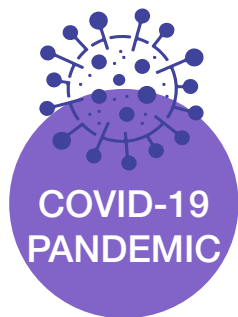
What are the key factors for improving mental health and well-being?

Coping skills and resilience

- Adolescents are able to cope when exposed to disasters by learning how to take care of themselves and engaging in positive coping strategies that lead to better mental health outcomes and increase in resilience.
- The World Health Organization developed the following recommendations for adolescents to help them cope with stress (PDF).

Community of care and access to mental health and addictions services

- It's important to find innovative ways to deliver mental health care to adolescents.
- Mental health care went from in-person to virtual consultations, a change seen in many countries across the globe.

Psychosocial interventions

- Providing ongoing psychosocial interventions have proven to be effective after traumatic events such as cognitive behavioural therapy, eye movement desensitization and reprocessing, narrative exposure therapy for children and classroom-based interventions.

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