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Teens often use social media to connect with friends, but heavy use can crowd out face-to-face interaction and other activities.

Ending the feed frenzy: Balance life with social media use

By **Krysten Godfrey Maddocks**
Special to the Union Leader

It's like candy for the brain. Social media activity triggers a dopamine release in the brain's reward system similar to eating, gambling or receiving praise. For teens, the lure of social media can lead to avoiding homework or sports, poor self-esteem, or even more harmful behaviors such as bullying or eating disorders.

At the same time, social media serves as the main communication hub for teens. According to the Surgeon General's report released in 2023, up to 95% of youth ages 13-17 report using a social media platform, with more than a third saying they use social media "almost constantly." While most platforms require students be over the age of 13, nearly 40% of children ages 8-12 report using social media.

"It's become embedded in childhood today," said Heather Inyart, executive director of Media Power Youth, a youth development organization based in

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Bumps in the road: Navigating teen acne and proper skin care

By **Krysten Godfrey Maddocks**
Special to the Union Leader

Less-than-perfect skin has always plagued adolescence, and now it happens at a time when kids are interested in posting selfies and fitting in with their peers. It can be tempting for them to hide behind digital filters or makeup, but there are better actions teens can take to clear up their complexions.

"One of the pros of social media is that we are seeing a huge resurgence in people looking for skin care — in adults and children of all ages," said Dr. Shonagh Leonard, a dermatologist at Optima Dermatology in Manchester. "While I think teen skin care gets a bit of a bad reputation for being a money grab for selling products on TikTok and things like that, it's actually a great opportunity to talk about skin and intervene early."

If your child is experiencing blotchy skin, they aren't alone. Acne is the most common skin condition in the United States, affecting up to 50 million Americans annually, and approximately 85% of people between the ages of 12 and 24 experience at least minor acne, according to the American Academy of Dermatology Association.

An earlier study published in the Journal of the American Academy of Dermatology found that only 25% of teens with acne



Dr. Shonagh Leonard

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WARNING SIGNS



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In New Hampshire, the 2023 Youth Risk Behavior Survey found that 40% of students felt persistently sad or hopeless, and about a third said their mental health was not good most or all of the time.

Teen mood swings that signal something more serious

■ New Hampshire mental health experts explain warning signs of anxiety and depression — and when parents should seek help.

By **Krysten Godfrey Maddocks**
Special to the Union Leader

The shift can be subtle at first. Your motivated teen who once enjoyed staying late at practice now wants to quit her favorite sport. Grades start slipping. You might notice changes in friendships or that the bedroom door stays closed longer.

It can be difficult for parents to tell the difference between normal teenage moodiness and more serious issues like anxiety or depression. Concern about your child's mood is understandable, since research shows many teens are struggling. According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, one in six U.S. adolescents has a major depressive episode each year. In New Hampshire, the 2023 Youth Risk Behavior Survey found that 40% of students felt persistently sad or hopeless, and about a third said their mental health was not good most or all of the time.

"Emotions and emotional range are part of the normal human experience," said Dr. Sarah Rocha, a child and adolescent psychiatrist at Elliot Behavioral Health. "People have a bad day; but if you're seeing a consistent change in your child's behavior or mood for two weeks or more that seems to be a pattern, that's when I would really recommend calling your health care provider."

What does poor teen mental health look like

New Hampshire medical experts say your child may be facing



Dr. Sarah Rocha

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VITAPIX/GETTY

If you see a consistent change in your child's behavior or mood for two weeks, it may be time to check in with a health care provider.

Common reasons teens seek therapy

William Charmak, a clinical and medical psychologist at Foundation Counseling and Wellness in Nashua, says teens go to therapy for many reasons, and there's usually more than one cause for their anxiety or depression.

Social media, Charmak said, is one of the biggest triggers of poor mental health in teens.

"I can state that nearly 50% of teens are negatively affected by their use of social media platforms associated with accurate pressure to copy unhealthy behaviors such as maintaining peer-approved physical appearances, resulting in body image and eating disorders," he said.

"Social media too has been used as a platform for cyberbullying and humiliation."

Family problems or not feeling supported by caretakers often come up in therapy. Teens also talk about academic and peer pressure. Charmak said the pandemic has made kids feel more behind in subjects

like math and reading, which makes them worry about getting into college or finding good jobs.

Kids today are increasingly more worried about their safety, both at school and elsewhere. Charmak said that between 2023 and 2025, weapons were fired on school grounds an average of 220 times each year.

"One doesn't have to witness or be a part of traumatic events to be affected," he said. "We know that watching graphic news stories and social media feeds can cause something known as vicarious trauma, which still requires professional assistance."

In some cases, kids are experiencing an identity crisis as they explore who they are and want to be.

"It's a normal phase where we question our beliefs, values and sometimes gender and sexual identities," Charmak said. "These aren't easy matters, especially in an increasingly less tolerant, misinformed culture."

— *Krysten Godfrey Maddocks*

No Flavors this week

The monthly NHMedical section takes the place of this week's Flavors section. Flavors, with Our Gourmet, returns next week.

Social Media

From Page B1

Manchester. "It's a very complex thing to navigate."

Media Power Youth helps students, families and educators explore the role of media in their lives and help them build skills and strategies for managing it. Programs help students build literacy and critical thinking skills around using social media, video games, artificial intelligence chatbots and other forms of digital media. The organization, funded by grants and corporate donations, also develops curriculum for schools and digital wellness workshops for families.

One message Media Power Youth works to get across to students is that there is a strong connection between social media and mental health. It's not realistic to ban students from using their favorite platforms, but we can provide students with the tools to understand what good mental health looks like and how certain ways of using social media can impact it, Inyart said.

"Learning the strategies to control their interaction with social media so it's not controlling them is a really important thing to talk about with students, both within the context of their family life and in our health education system," she said. "They need to know what are the underlying factors that contribute to mental health — which is social connectedness, self-confidence and having a support system."

The consequences of digital media use

Right now, popular social media brands like Meta (which owns Facebook and Instagram) and Tik Tok are facing legal challenges for promoting products that many say are harmful to tweens and teens.

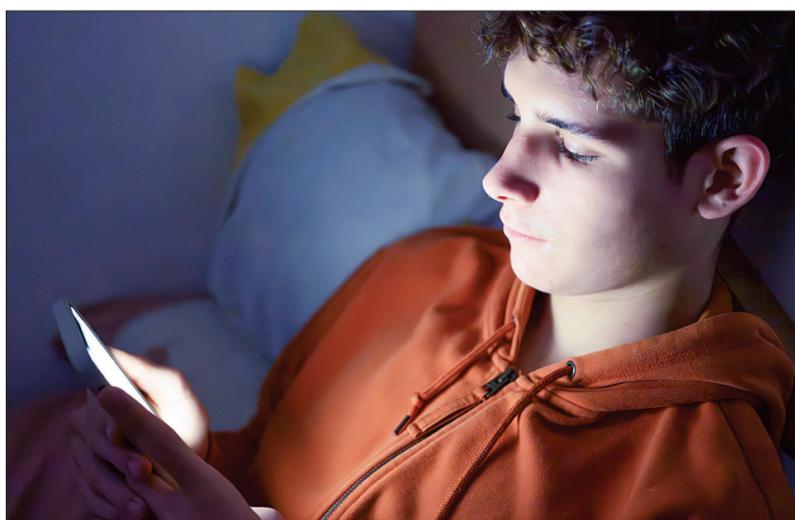
The State of New Hampshire is currently involved

in two major lawsuits related to teen mental health and social media platforms, specifically targeting Meta and TikTok. These cases are part of a broader national effort by states to hold social media companies accountable for alleged harm to young users. Earlier this month, New Mexico became the first state among the state-led lawsuits targeting social media companies to go to trial. The New Mexico Department of Justice is questioning whether Meta knew its platforms posed safety risks but failed to make meaningful changes.

Some studies have shown that heavy social media use can have addictive qualities and affects sleep in adolescents. However, Inyart said we don't have enough of a body of research to truly understand the mental health effects of digital media use because we don't have standard definitions around things like what constitutes "quality screen time" and what types of social media algorithms are especially harmful to children. One of the immediate ways to gauge its impacts on youth mental health is to help teens understand their moods around digital usage, she said.

"In our media literacy curriculum, we have a media log activity that students can use to look at their use over the course of a week," she said. "You can look at what sites you were on, what you were doing, what type of content you were viewing and how you were interacting with them. And they assign an emoji to the experience that describes how it made them feel."

Inyart also encourages students to notice when and how much social media crowds out other activities, such as time with friends and family, hobbies



JAVIER ZAYAZ/GETTY

Experts say heavy social media use can affect teens' sleep, mood and self-esteem, especially late at night.

or sports.

"An example I use in one of our workshops: If you're an artist and realize you've been looking at Instagram at all of this art but can't remember the last time you actually painted something, then it probably means your balance of social media relative to you creating something has gotten out of balance," she said.

Students do understand how social media works and realize that companies are incentivized to keep them glued to their platforms. Teens also know that what appears on their feeds is being pushed to them by an algorithm. For example, platforms use artificial intelligence to analyze a user's behavior and serve up ads and videos they think might interest viewers and keep them hooked.

"Some of them have actually pushed back," Inyart said. "One student from our youth advisory board wrote about how they can curate their feed based on who they follow, and how to unfollow and refollow different types of people in order to create a more positive feed."

Social media use isn't likely to go away anytime soon. But parents shouldn't feel powerless, Inyart said, nor should they try to impose restrictions all at once. Instead of focusing on time spent on social media, families should instead focus on what kids are doing off-screen.

"Have discussions as a family, like how much time are we all spending on social media?" she said. "I do a family workshop where we do this and sometimes (the people) spending the most amount of time online are not the children."

How families can curb media overuse

Social media scrolling isn't inherently negative; in fact, teens can use it to learn about new things and solve problems. Of course, kids overwhelmingly use social media to connect with others and build social currency through likes, follows and comments. However, humans don't get the same boost of oxytocin from being online as they do in-person interactions, which is why it's important

for families to encourage mindful digital media use.

Here are some tips Inyart has for families:

- **Know your apps.** Kids left Facebook for TikTok a long time ago, and new apps pop up regularly. For more information about how to manage social media and mental health, families can visit the American Academy of Pediatrics Center of Excellence on Social Media and Youth Mental Health, which offers a glossary of all of the social media apps, their features, and how to use settings to help create a more positive and secure online experience.

- **Explain that the beauty standards presented on social media aren't realistic.** Thanks to filters and other technology, individuals can present themselves anyway they'd like in videos or photos. When kids get exposed to these images, it can be hard for them, especially at a time when their bodies are changing, Inyart said.

- **Teach your children about the risks.** When we give youth smartphones or watches, or the ability to access social media, we're

giving companies access to our children, their movements and their thoughts, and there are risks associated with that, Inyart said. Some apps promise that messages disappear; but nothing on the internet truly evaporates. Some families opt to monitor their children's media use, based on age and maturity, but Inyart encourages parents to be transparent about why they are monitoring and why they are concerned.

- **Establish the optimal communication experience.** Just because a child has a device, it doesn't mean that they need every feature on it. Inyart urges parents to think about what their communications goals are. If kids need a watch or phone to reach their parents, they don't necessarily need access to the internet.

- **Use safeguards provided by your internet provider.** Some providers allow for options that restrict users from downloading apps without permission. That way, if your child wants to use Instagram on their device, you can have a conversation about it before they start engaging with it.

- **Set family norms around using media in a balanced and healthy way.** For example, setting a no-phones rule in cars or at restaurants can be a rule parents set ahead of time. Parents should also model their own media usage in front of their children.

- **Empower teens to set their own norms around digital usage.** Part of growing up includes learning how to make good decisions and navigate peer pressure. Encourage kids to have conversations with their friends about how often they text or message one another. That could include agreeing that no communication happens after 10 p.m. or the night before a big test.



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 Elliot Health System



Mental Health

From Page B1

challenges beyond teenage angst if their symptoms start to interfere with activities of daily life. When their behaviors are stopping them from doing things they usually enjoy, it might be time to seek help, said Dr. Jennifer McLaren, a pediatric psychiatrist with Dartmouth Health Children's.

"Some of those signs can be sleeping too much or too little, or withdrawing from things that they enjoy doing or from people they typically enjoy socializing with," McLaren said. "Or, you see a decline in their school functioning, like with grades or attendance, or if they're doing things that parents consider more risky behavior—such as using substances or self-harm."



Dr. Jennifer McLaren

Parents might miss signs that their teen is dealing with anxiety or depression, especially since depression can show up differently in teens, according to William Charmak, a board-certified clinical and medical psychologist at Foundation Counseling and Wellness in Nashua.

"Adults tend to present with what we have been led to believe are more common signs of depression, such as low self-worth, persistent sadness and guilt," he said. "Guilt is not often common in adolescent depression."

If teens feel depressed because of guilt or shame, it may be linked to bullying, which they might hide to seem successful to their families, Charmak said. Some teens don't act out but instead seem "numb" or disconnected from things or people they used to enjoy.



If you notice changes in your teen's mood or behavior, it's important to check in with them, even if they don't seem like they want to talk.

FIZKES/GETTY

Girls and boys can show anxiety and depression in different ways, with girls often showing symptoms at younger ages than boys, according to Dr. Alexandra Kuftinec, a board-certified child/adolescent/adult psychiatrist who works at Concord Hospital's Family Health Center as a member of the NH Dartmouth Family Medicine Residency. Kuftinec has been seeing teens for 20 years as a consultant in a primary care setting, while teaching family practice residents how to identify and treat behavioral health issues.

Girls tend to internalize what they feel and complain of headaches, stomachaches or develop disordered eating patterns. In boys, anxiety and depression can look like aggression or anger, and can include getting into fights,

she said.

Anxiety disorders may be one of the most prevalent mental health disorders in teens, but most teens have more than one diagnosis. Anxiety that's either untreated or undertreated can trigger depression. Teens can suffer from generalized anxiety disorder or social anxiety, as well as phobias or obsessive compulsive disorder, Rocha said.

"In today's world, people experience traumas not infrequently, so PTSD is a condition we see," she said. "We also have people coming in and saying they think they might have autism, and what does that mean for me?"

No matter how teens show signs of anxiety or depression, health care providers agree it's best to address concerns early.

"We see a behavior change, think that it's just a

phase, and we delay seeking care until it becomes a crisis, and then you have to wait three months to see someone," Rocha said. "The bigger challenge is in terms of getting that kind of acute crisis care to kids when they need it."

Screening at the primary care office

Primary care providers are often the first to identify potential mental health issues in children during yearly checkups. Kuftinec said her office uses the PHQ9 Personal Health Questionnaire for Adolescents, which asks nine questions to see if a teen might be struggling with depression. The survey covers feelings, focus, energy and thoughts of self-harm over two weeks. If symptoms show up more than half the days, it could mean

there's a problem, she said. Doctors also ask open-ended questions and look for physical signs.

"A typical question might be, is there anything you wish to discuss with me now that your parents or guardians have left the room," Kuftinec said. "Our providers are trained to see if a kid comes in looking really glum or upset. But parents often come in having concerns about substance abuse, anxiety and depression."

To help primary care providers with questions about symptoms or treatment, Dartmouth Children's and the University of New Hampshire developed the New Hampshire Mental Health Care Access and Pediatrics line. This service helps connect primary care providers throughout the state with experienced

mental health providers. A child and adolescent psychiatrist from Dartmouth Health Children's supports the line and can answer questions about assessment, diagnosis, treatment planning and medication.

"This is really to catch kids early in their struggles and give pediatrician recommendations so a child doesn't have to be put on a wait list to see a child psychiatrist," McLaren said. "(The pediatrician) can start interventions we may recommend or help answer any questions."

Acute care options

Sometimes, mental health issues can't wait for a scheduled doctor's appointment, especially if a teen is in crisis and may be a danger to themselves or others, or if their behavior can't be managed safely at home or with outpatient care. In these cases, children need inpatient psychiatric care, which can be challenging to find in New Hampshire.

To reduce wait times for psychiatric inpatient care, the state has expanded access over the past two years. Last year, Dartmouth Health became the clinical contractor for Hampstead Hospital and Residential Treatment Facility, adding more than 40 beds for patients ages 5 to 15. In April 2025, Dartmouth Health opened a new six-bed adolescent medical psychiatry unit for children ages 12 to 17.

McLaren said there is now a single point of access for children who need psychiatric inpatient care. An admissions team works with emergency departments to place children in the right beds as quickly as possible.

"We're seeing kids get to psychiatric inpatient beds

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Several Hundred New Hampshire Nursing Home Residents are Experiencing Severe Medicaid Cuts

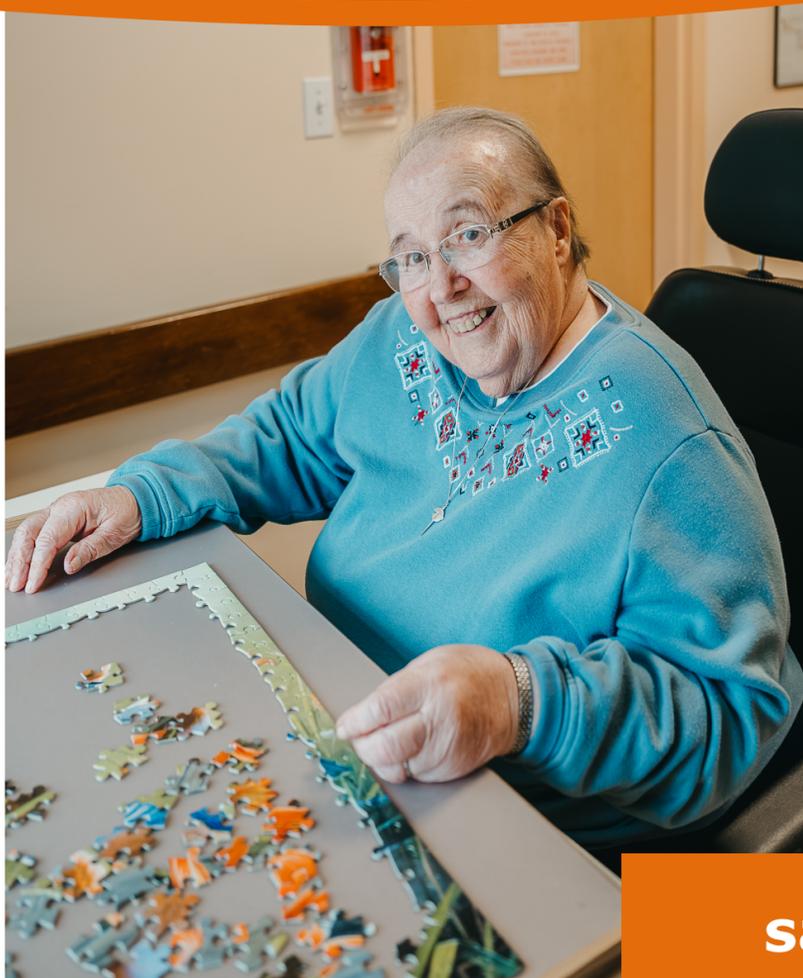
Despite bipartisan efforts by Gov. Ayotte and legislators to shore up Medicaid funding, care in many nursing homes, including Holy Cross Health Care Center in Manchester, took severe cuts January 1.

Sister Jacqueline, a former school principal, is among Holy Cross residents affected, as her care funding was cut 11.74%, or \$31.14 per day. Holy Cross was one of 19 hard-hit nursing homes where daily care cuts were no less than \$10.47 per resident and as much as \$45.89 for another small nonprofit.

The state budget cannot be "balanced" through such cuts. Senate Bill 663 would help create a fairer reimbursement system, and more Medicaid funding is desperately needed to protect care.

For more information, see

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PLEASE ask state legislators to pass Senate Bill 663 and provide more care funding in the 2026 legislative session for our most vulnerable Granite Staters.

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Acne

From Page B1

have visited a physician and only 14% have seen a dermatologist — which means a large percentage of teens may be suffering needlessly.

Skin is changing earlier

Tweens may begin sprouting pimples on their faces before they hit their teenage years. Kids can experience outbreaks as early as 9 or 10, with acne peaking between the ages of 11 and 14, when that used to be between the ages of 15 and 20. That's because children are reaching puberty earlier, according to Dr. Jennifer Fiore, a primary care pediatrician at Elliot Pediatrics in Manchester.



Dr. Jennifer Fiore

"As part of the process of puberty, hormones are changing in the body. These cause changes in the skin. One is that there is more production of sebum, which is like a natural oil in the skin that is produced by the glands in the skin," Fiore said. "Inside the pores of the skin, there are also dead skin cells that become stickier during puberty and clog the pores."

The combination provides an optimal environment for bacteria to grow, which leads to inflammation and the development of acne.

More than washing your face

While diet and good hygiene contribute to a healthy complexion, genetics play a bigger role. If you have a family history of acne, genetics contributes to an 80% risk that your teen will have the same skin condition.

The causes of acne are multifactorial, according to Leonard, but in patients with severe acne, there tends to be a genetic component.

Diet contributes to good skin health, but there isn't enough evi-

dence to rule out specific foods causing acne. The myth about chocolate causing zits is, in fact, a myth. As a rule, teens with skin problems should avoid diets high in refined sugar or high in whey protein, Leonard said. While these foods may be a trigger, they aren't necessarily the cause of acne.

"It's not going to cause acne in a person who likely wasn't otherwise genetically or hormonally predisposed," she said. "I don't ever recommend dietary changes for acne, particularly in kiddos, as long as they eat a relatively well-balanced diet."

However, according to Dr. Julianne Mann, section chief of pediatric dermatology with Dartmouth Health Children's, whole foods that typically make up a Mediterranean Diet can improve some teens' complexions.

That said, teens shouldn't skimp on hygiene. Mann suggests that teens wash with a cleanser every evening and rinse with water in the morning. Unfortunately, due to a lot of online advertisements and influencers, dermatologists are seeing kids take facial cleansing to an extreme. Fiore stressed that it's possible for kids to over-wash, which can lead to skin irritation and the skin drying out, which will just cause it to overproduce oil and exacerbate the problem.



Dr. Julianne Mann

Other tweens and teens create elaborate skin care routines and even try to concoct potions they see in social media.

"I'm not a big believer that you have to pay top dollar for good quality skin care," Leonard said. "Gentle cleansers, like CeraVe and La Roche-Posay, tend to be the bread and butter for most

people."

She warns against using multiple products and those with additives and harsh chemicals, but cautions that mixtures made in the kitchen can be just as harmful. A recent trend includes using beef tallow to treat acne — which clogs the pores even more.

"Chemical compounds, whether they're natural or chemically made, can still contribute to irritation and contact dermatitis and rashes," Leonard said.

One thing teens should not do is squeeze acne or pick at their faces — which can leave long-lasting dark spots, Mann said.

When to visit the doctor

When teens feel like they aren't seeing improvement on their own, it may be time to visit the doctor. Families can start the treatment process with their child's pediatrician, particularly if they are looking for help treating mild or moderate acne, Fiore said. Pediatricians typically start with topical therapies and may prescribe oral medications.

However, after six to eight weeks of no improvement, or more severe cases of acne, families might consider making an appointment with a dermatologist, said Dr. Jonathan Glass, a dermatologist with Seacoast Dermatology.

"After about two months, if (treatment) is not working, a dermatologist should be consulted to consider escalating treatments, such as a stronger retinoid and antibiotics," he said.

Teens should also consider visiting a dermatologist if they're already seeing pitted scars or redness.

Leonard said it can take anywhere from six to 12 months for post-inflammatory pigmentation, or red blotches, to go away after acne clears. Although it improves with time, a dermatologist can use chemical peels and vitamin C serums to expedite healing.

For those patients who do have scars, dermatologists are able to resurface the skin using lasers.

"For very deep, almost pocked scars, we can break up some of that scar tissue with a technique called subcision, for some of the larger, singular spots," she said. "And then the laser is good for all over."

Beyond acne: Other teen skin conditions

Acne isn't the only skin malady teens may encounter. Eczema and fungal infections are also common, Leonard said.

Teens may get a few patches of eczema, or dry, scaly skin, during the winter months. Or they can present with a full body rash that makes them susceptible to other health conditions.

Like acne, eczema tends to be genetic and is caused by a barrier protein defect in the skin. Many kids who suffer from eczema also have allergies and asthma. Topical treatments and regular moisturizing can help control dry patches.

"If your eczema is poorly controlled, you have cracks in your skin barrier and you can get secondary bacterial infections," she said.

Glass said that dandruff and psoriasis are also conditions that shouldn't be shrugged off. Dandruff on the scalp or face can be treated with over-the-counter shampoo, but prescription-strength shampoos are more effective for moderate to severe cases.

Kids who play sports may also develop fungal infections, such as athlete's foot. Chronic athlete's foot increases a patient's risk of getting secondary infections that are harder to treat, Leonard said.

"When you have a bacterial infection and a fungal infection, you can spread that to other parts of the body and also spread it to household contacts and people in sports facilities or locker rooms," she said. "You can

certainly try over-the-counter treatments. Not everything needs to be prescription-only, but it warrants treatment."

One piece of skin advice today's teens seem to be taking seriously: using sun protection regularly and avoiding indoor tanning beds. Most teens understand the risks of sunbathing, an activity earlier generations of young people ignored.

Doctors emphasize that children and teens should regularly wear sunscreen and avoid artificial tanning.

Ultraviolet light ages skin quickly, and repeated exposures have long-term consequences such as brown spots, wrinkles, and bruising, Glass said.

"Vermont and New Hampshire also have exceptionally high rates of skin cancer, including melanoma," he said. "Any sun protection habits you start now will have long-lasting benefits."

Understanding the emotional toll

For many teens, acne doesn't just "go away." If it bothers them, it's important to seek care, Fiore said. Now more than ever, they being exposed to highly unrealistic photos and videos of popular influencers, models or movie stars who use filters to digitally enhance their features. They may feel like something is wrong with them or feel pressure to present a better image.

"Acne is a physical condition but it can also affect kids' confidence, cause psychological distress and lead to permanent scarring," she said. "Some kids are more bothered by their acne than others, and that's important to respect, too. It's a good reminder for teens to understand that what you see on social media is not reality. No one's skin is perfect all of the time. Acne is a normal part of puberty and development, and we're here to navigate that."

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Mental Health

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quicker at times," McLaren said. "We've had actually no wait list, depending on the time of year, and the wait list has been a lot shorter."

Talking to your children

If you notice changes in your teen's mood or behavior, it's important to check in with them, even if they don't seem like they want to talk. Rocha said parents often ask questions that aren't open-ended. For example, asking if your child feels "good" or "bad" usually doesn't reveal much about how they're really feeling.

"You might say, Hey I noticed you aren't wanting to go to this practice anymore. Can you tell me a little bit more about what's going on with that," Rocha said. "Rather than asking, why don't you want to go to practice?"

Talking to coaches or teachers can also help you discover whether they notice the same behaviors you see at home. This can give parents insight into possible bullying, social problems or medical issues. Kufnec encourages parents to find activities they and their children both enjoy, like watching a TV show together or having dinner out once a week.

"Having those points of connection and having open communication and being open about your own personal experiences (is important)," she said. "Being able to ask questions like, 'Has anybody been pushing you to use substances? What did you do?'"

Finding appropriate mental health support

Parents shouldn't feel

ashamed or blame themselves if their child is struggling, Rocha said, nor should they feel overwhelmed by finding the appropriate mental health

How you can help teens better manage their anxiety

Parents can help teens build skills that can prepare them for adulthood and teach them how to manage anxiety, said William Charmak, a board-certified clinical and medical psychologist at Foundation Counseling and Wellness in Nashua.

- **Build appropriate social skills.** This includes establishing effective rapport with others, communicating ideas clearly, and showing empathy and compassion.
- **Learn how to practice gratitude for what you have.** Make yourself available to help others who are less

fortunate or who would benefit from assistance. This can help teens feel less entitled, he said.

- **Accept failure and embrace opportunities to gain experience from mistakes.**

- **Adopt regular sleeping, exercise and healthy eating routines.** Data shows that poor diet and lack of exercise contribute to both diet and depressive disorders, he said.

- **Develop resilience, or coping skills.** Learn how to cope with disappointments without collapse.

— Krysten Godfrey Maddocks

there are open access hours in all of the community mental health centers that you can walk in and ask for an evaluation," she said. "At Elliot, we have a behavioral health navigator whose sole job is to help families navigate resources in New Hampshire because it's difficult to figure out how to get care for your child."

If children see an Elliot primary care provider, they can be referred to an Elliot Behavioral Health provider for screening within seven days. Brule said most screenings are done by telehealth, which is convenient for families and teens.

"This group has no problem getting on their cell-phone, and it's been really helpful for families where the parents are at work, and the kids can connect via video," she said.

care. Melissa Brule, director of Behavioral Health and Specialty Services at Elliot Hospital, said navigating the mental health system

can feel very complicated for families in New Hampshire, but there is help available.

"If you don't have a pediatrician that you trust,

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Feel better. Move more. Live healthier. Start today!
Programs offered virtually and in person. YMCA membership not required to participate, financial assistance also available.



To learn more and register, scan the QR code or contact Cindy Lafond, Executive Director of Health Interventions at clafond@graniteymca.org.

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Teen Health: Growing Up Healthy, Confident, and Informed

At every stage of adolescence, teens are developing habits, identities, and relationships that can shape their futures. Understanding common topics such as fitness and nutrition, body image and acne, healthy relationships, bullying, mental health, and substance use can help teens thrive and feel empowered to seek help when they need it.

Concord Hospital Health System's Teen Health Learning Library brings you trusted answers, practical tips, and helpful resources designed just for teens and families. And when questions go beyond what you read online, our primary care providers are trained and available to help — offering guidance, screenings, and personalized care in a supportive, confidential setting.

Fitness & Nutrition

Teen bodies require proper fuel and activity to grow strong. Regular physical activity supports heart health, bone strength, and emotional well-being. Balanced eating helps with energy levels, growth, and mood — and encourages a positive relationship with food. Our primary care providers can help teens and parents assess growth patterns and build healthy routines that last.

Acne & Body Changes

Skin concerns like acne are common during puberty. Understanding why breakouts happen and how to care for your skin can boost confidence and reduce frustration. If over-the-counter solutions aren't enough, our primary care providers can evaluate skin concerns and refer teens to a specialist.

Emotional Health & Relationships

Adolescence can bring big feelings. Mood changes, stress, friendships, and romantic relationships are all part of growing up. It's normal to feel overwhelmed sometimes. Our primary care providers are trained to screen for concerns such as anxiety and depression, provide guidance, and connect teens with additional support when needed.

Bullying, Anxiety & Depression

Bullying in person or online can take a toll on a teen's sense of safety and self-worth. Anxiety and depression are also common and treatable when recognized early. Primary care providers offer a safe place to talk about emotional challenges and can help determine next steps for care and support.

Tobacco, Alcohol & Other Substances

Experimentation with cigarettes, vaping, alcohol, or other substances can carry real health risks. Teens need facts to understand how these choices affect their developing bodies and brains. Teens and parents can rely on primary care providers for honest conversations, education about risks, and strategies to prevent or address substance use.

Eating Disorders & Body Image

Preoccupations with weight and appearance can lead to disordered eating patterns. Early recognition and compassionate support are crucial to recovery. Primary care providers can assess concerns, monitor health, and guide families toward appropriate treatment resources.

Parents and teens alike can explore these topics in depth through our Teen Health Learning Library and turn to our primary care providers for personalized guidance, screenings, and treatment when needed.

Explore
TEEN HEALTH
TOPICS



Schedule a
Primary Care
APPOINTMENT