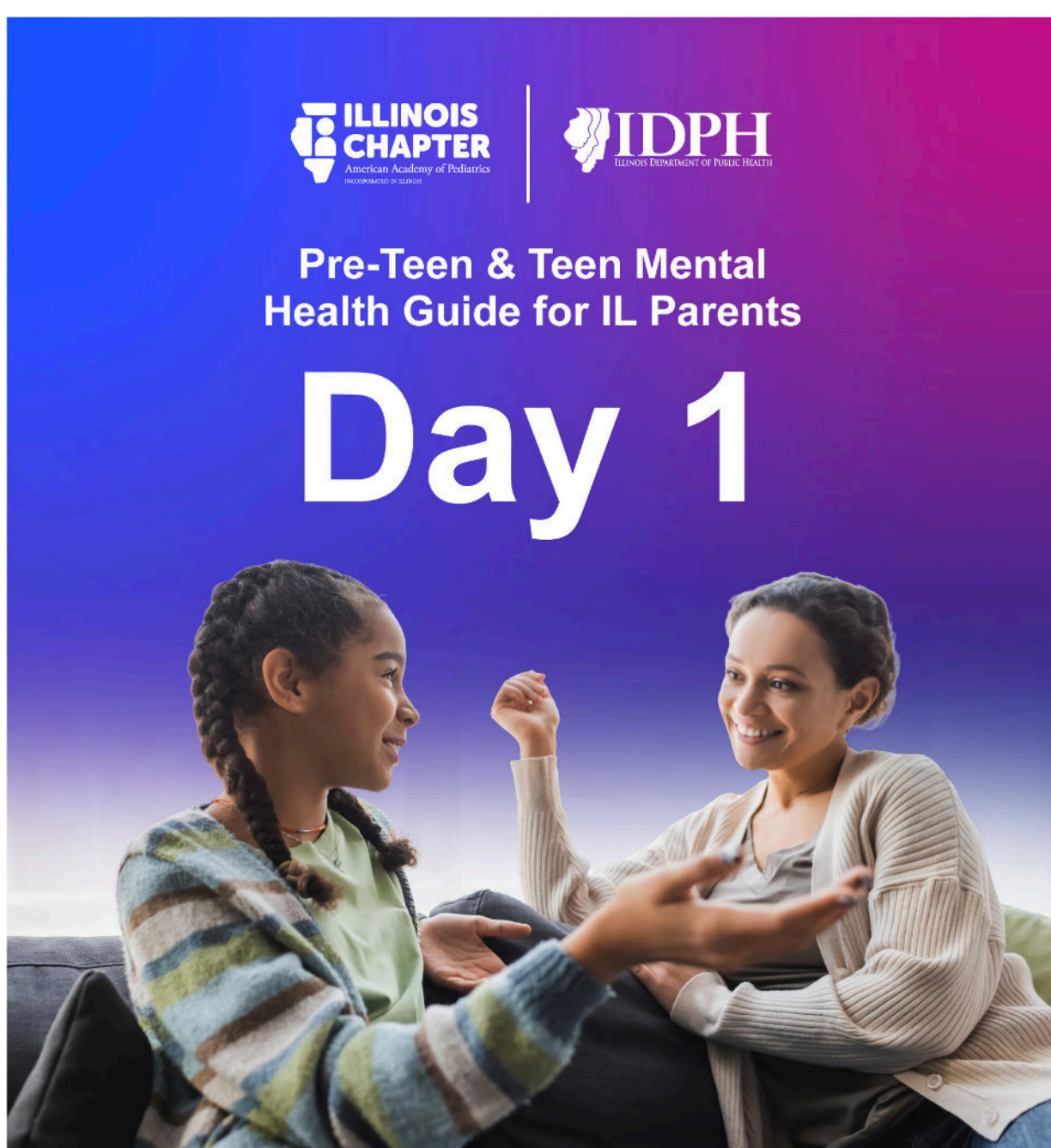


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Welcome Back!

Let's be honest, parenting teenagers is complex and sometimes emotionally hard. As teens grow and change, they face new social pressures, responsibilities, and emotional shifts that can be difficult to navigate — for both them and you.

Your teen has a lot going on in their brain — there are big, key changes happening to it during teenage years. Understanding the biological reason behind your teen's behavior will change how you respond to everything from mood swings to risky decisions.

Your Teen's Under-Construction Brain

Right now, your child's prefrontal cortex — the brain's CEO that handles planning, decision-making, and impulse control — is going through major renovation. It won't be fully developed until their mid-20s. Meanwhile, their emotional center (the amygdala) is already firing on all cylinders.

Think of it this way: Your teen is driving a sports car (powerful emotions and social drives) with a learner's permit (still-developing judgment). They have the accelerator but haven't mastered the brakes.

What This Looks Like at Home:

- They solve complex algebra but "forget" their lunch three days in a row
- They have a meltdown over the "wrong" brand of snacks but stay calm during actual crises
- They make elaborate weekend plans with friends but can't organize their homework
- They worry a lot about what friends and classmates think, but don't seem to worry at all about your concerns

Why This Matters for Mental Health

This unique period of brain development makes adolescents particularly vulnerable to stress, anxiety, and depression. Their emotional responses are intense, but their ability to regulate those emotions is still developing.

It's like having all the feelings with only half the coping tools.

Try This Today

When your teen makes a questionable decision, resist asking "What were you thinking?!"

Instead try: "Walk me through what happened." This helps them practice how to remember and recall their actions, reflect on whether or not it was the best for that situation, and learn from it.

Remember: Your teen isn't being deliberately difficult. They're navigating the world with a brain that's brilliantly capable in some areas and still under construction in others. So, when you want to share your concerns about a poor choice, be sure to consider the timing. Although it may seem tempting (or even important!) to discuss your concerns immediately, it's often better for both you and your teen to take a moment (sometimes even 24 hours) to reflect and calm down before you're able to have a meaningful discussion.

Helpful Resources:

Throughout this guide, we'll share trusted resources from [HealthyChildren.org](https://www.healthychildren.org), the official parenting website of the American Academy of Pediatrics, along with other pediatrician-recommended links to help you find answers and additional support.

- [Stages of Adolescence](#)
- [How to Talk with Your Child and Their Pediatrician About Mental Health Concerns](#)

Tomorrow we will explore common mental health concerns in teens.

Hang in there,

The ICAAP Team

Get Connected!



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