

Data Spotlight

National Survey on Drug Use and Health

July 19, 2012

Depression Triples between the Ages of 12 and 15 among Adolescent Girls

The onset of puberty is associated with an increase in depression among adolescents, particularly among adolescent girls. According to the 2008 to 2010 National Surveys on Drug Use and Health, an annual average of 1.4 million girls aged 12 to 17 (12.0 percent) experienced a major depressive episode (MDE)¹ in the past year—a rate nearly 3 times that of their male peers (4.5 percent). The percentage of girls who experienced MDE tripled between the ages of 12 and 15 (from 5.1 to 15.2 percent) (Figure 1). About one third of girls aged 12 to 14 with MDE received treatment² for depression in the past year compared with about two fifths of those aged 15 to 17 (Figure 2).

Given the young age at which MDE begins to increase among girls, prevention and intervention efforts targeting adolescents in middle school may help ameliorate depression onset, as well as reduce depression recurrence through the life course. For more information about addressing the mental health needs of adolescent girls and women, please visit <http://store.samhsa.gov/shin/content//SMA11-4657/SMA11-4657.pdf>.

¹ MDE is defined using the criteria set forth in the fourth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-IV), which specifies a period of 2 weeks or longer in which there is either depressed mood or loss of interest or pleasure and at least four other symptoms that reflect a change in functioning, such as problems with sleep, eating, energy, concentration, and self-image. See American Psychiatric Association. (1994). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (4th edition). Washington, DC: Author.

² Treatment is defined as seeing or talking to a medical doctor or other professional or using prescription medication for depression in the past year. Respondents with unknown treatment data were excluded.

Figure 1. Major Depressive Episode in the Past Year among Girls Aged 12 to 17: 2008 to 2010

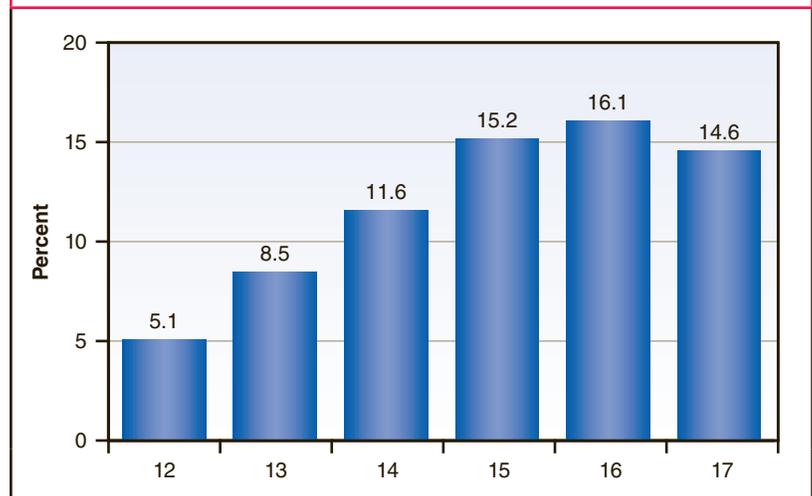


Figure 2. Treatment for Depression in the Past Year among Girls Aged 12 to 17 with Past Year Major Depressive Episode: 2008 to 2010



Source: National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), 2008 to 2010 (revised March 2012). NSDUH is an annual survey sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). The survey collects data by administering questionnaires to a representative sample of the population through face-to-face interviews at their places of residence.

