



The key messages for each theme of the European Public Health WEEK 2019 are based on evidence and resources shared by a variety of sources, including:

- The World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Office for Europe
- The European Commission (e.g. through the State of Health in the EU – Companion report 2017)
- EUPHA Sections, EUPHA members and EUPHANxt
- Experts from the Council of Occupational Therapists for European Countries (COTEC), World Federation of Physical Therapy – European Region (WCPT), Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL), European Federation of the Associations of Dietitians (EFAD) and Euro Youth Mental Health (EYMH).

Unless stated otherwise, messages refer to all 53 Member States of the WHO Regional Office for Europe.

Please refer to the [media toolkit](#) for guidance on how to best use the key messages.

Friday 17 May - Youth mental health

Motto of the day: “I am me even when I’m bruised.”

Key messages

1. Having good mental health as well as physical health enables young people to deal with the challenges of adolescence and eases their transition into adulthood.
2. Mental health and wellbeing during adolescence are strongly influenced by life experiences and relationships. Key protective factors include a sense of parent and family connectedness, with social support supplied by at least one caring adult.
3. Children and adolescents need safe, secure, inclusive homes, schools and social environments in which to develop and thrive.

4. A positive and respectful approach to sexuality, gender diversity and sexual orientation is important for a healthy development of adolescents and helps to prevent mental health problems.
5. The Internet is a tool which can be used to improve our lives by helping us find information or connect with others. Internet is just a tool - use it for your own benefit, do not let it use you.

Other facts and figures

- Up to 1 in 5 adolescents in the European Union live with psychological or behavioural problems.
- Mental health problems can have damaging effects on young people's social, intellectual and emotional development and consequently on their future. The adolescent years are a critical life stage for actions to protect and promote mental health and wellbeing for the long term.
- Suicide is the second leading cause of death in high-income countries in the European Region in younger age groups. It accounts for 18% of all deaths among people between 15 and 29 years old.
- Social, psychological, cultural and other factors can interact to lead a person to suicidal behaviour, but the stigma attached to mental disorders and suicide means that many people feel unable to seek help.
- Factors associated with poor mental health and wellbeing include bullying, lack of acceptance by peers and lack of support from parents and teachers.
- About half of all mental health problems in adulthood have their onset during or before adolescence.
- Services and practice do not always reflect the knowledge of what works in mental health care and treatment. Many countries have limited community-based mental health services and little specialist help for young or elderly people.
- Young children with intellectual disabilities are an extremely vulnerable group often subjected to discrimination and neglect.
- Supportive parenting, a secure home life and a positive learning environment in school are key factors in building and protecting mental health and wellbeing in adolescence.
- The digital world has introduced new risks for young people: social platforms can be tools for cyber-bullying and have a harmful impact promoting body image concerns and disordered eating.
- Smartphones can track details of people's physical and mood changes, which allows clinicians real-time access to their patients' feelings and behaviour. They can also deliver psycho-education. But unprecedented access to information brings issues of reliability and confidentiality.