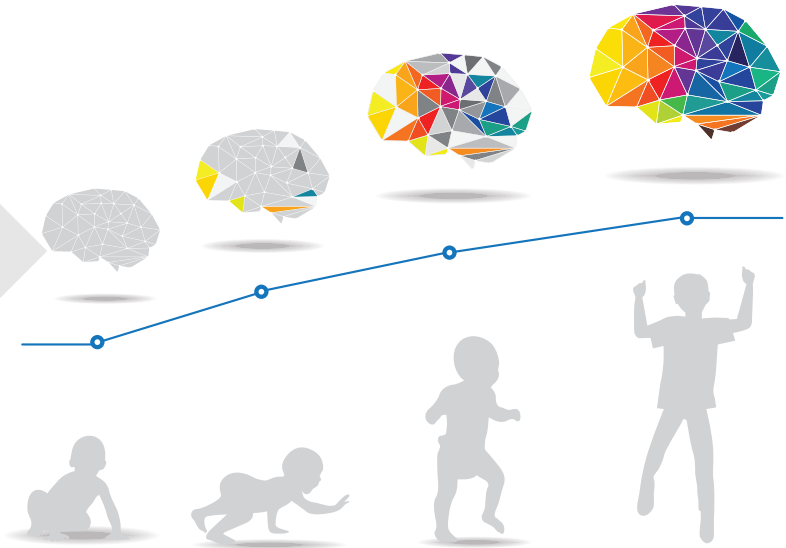


THE TEEN BRAIN: 6 THINGS TO KNOW

DID YOU KNOW THAT **BIG AND IMPORTANT CHANGES ARE HAPPENING TO THE BRAIN DURING ADOLESCENCE?** HERE ARE **6 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT THE TEEN BRAIN:**

1 YOUR BRAIN DOES NOT KEEP GETTING BIGGER AS YOU GET OLDER.

For girls, the brain reaches its largest physical size around 11 years old and for boys, the brain reaches its largest physical size around age 14. Of course, this difference in age does not mean either boys or girls are smarter than one another!

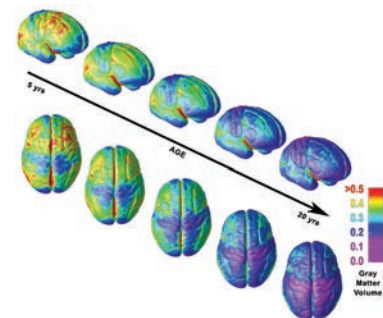


2 BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN YOUR BRAIN IS DONE MATURING.

For both boys and girls, although your brain may be as large as it will ever be, your brain doesn't finish developing and maturing until your mid- to late-20s. The front part of the brain, called the prefrontal cortex, is one of the last brain regions to mature. It is the area responsible for planning, prioritizing and controlling impulses.

3 THE TEEN BRAIN IS READY TO LEARN AND ADAPT.

In a digital world that is constantly changing, the adolescent brain is well prepared to adapt to new technology—and is shaped in return by experience.



4 MANY MENTAL DISORDERS APPEAR DURING ADOLESCENCE.

All the big changes the brain is experiencing may explain why adolescence is the time when many mental disorders—such as schizophrenia, anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder, and eating disorders—emerge.



5 THE TEEN BRAIN IS RESILIENT.

Although adolescence is a vulnerable time for the brain and for teenagers in general, most teens go on to become healthy adults. Some changes in the brain during this important phase of development actually may help protect against long-term mental disorders.



6 TEENS NEED MORE SLEEP THAN CHILDREN AND ADULTS.

Although it may seem like teens are lazy, science shows that melatonin levels (or the “sleep hormone” levels) in the blood naturally rise later at night and fall later in the morning than in most children and adults. This may explain why many teens stay up late and struggle with getting up in the morning. Teens should get about 9-10 hours of sleep a night, but most teens don't get enough sleep. A lack of sleep makes paying attention hard, increases impulsivity and may also increase irritability and depression.

For More Information

For more information on conditions that affect mental health, resources, and research, go to **MentalHealth.gov** at www.mentalhealth.gov, or the NIMH website at www.nimh.nih.gov. In addition, the National Library of Medicine's MedlinePlus service (www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/) has information on a wide variety of health topics, including conditions that affect mental health.

If you do not have Internet access and would like more information on the teen brain, please contact the NIMH Information Resource Center at 1-866-615-6464 or 1-866-415-8051 (TTY toll-free).

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