

More teenage girls with eating disorders wound up in ER during pandemic

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(HealthDay)—Emergency rooms across the country have seen a surge in

the number of teenage girls dealing with eating and other disorders, including anxiety, depression and stress, during the pandemic, a new government report shows.

The [report](#) offers up compelling evidence about the kinds of [mental health issues](#) that have plagued a generation of adolescents.

Mental health experts suspect the pandemic left many young people feeling isolated and lonely, said Emily Pluhar, a pediatric psychologist at Boston Children's Hospital and instructor at Harvard Medical School.

"You take a very vulnerable group and put on a global pandemic," she told The New York Times. "The [eating disorders](#) are out of control."

In the study, researchers from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) said the proportion of eating disorder visits doubled among teenage girls, set off by pandemic-related risk factors, such as the "lack of structure in daily routine, emotional distress and changes in food availability."

There was also an increase seen in tic disorders among teen girls, the report found.

That spike was "atypical," as tic disorders tend to surface earlier in life and are more common in boys. But the CDC scientists suggested that some teenage girls may be developing tics after seeing the phenomenon spread widely on social media, notably on Tik Tok.

"Stress of the pandemic or exposure to severe tics, highlighted on [social media](#) platforms, might be associated with increases in visits with tics and tic-like behavior among adolescent females," they wrote.

In a related [report](#), the CDC also noted the increase in visits for mental

health issues occurred as emergency rooms reported sharp declines in overall visits during the pandemic. Compared to 2019, overall visits fell by 51% in 2020 and by 22% in 2021, declines that the agency attributed in part to families delaying care, and a drop in physical injuries from sports activities like swimming and running.

Notably, there was a decline in [emergency room visits](#) for mental health conditions among all youths, up to age 17. Increases were only seen for certain conditions, and particularly among [teenage girls](#).

The surge in adolescent mental health issues can not be blamed solely on the pandemic, however: Emergency room visits among youths related to depression, anxiety and similar issues rose by 28% from 2007 to 2018, according to another [report](#) by the U.S. surgeon general.

In its report, the CDC said that mental health-related ER visits for teenage boys fell in both 2020 and 2021. But the the agency noted that the visitation trends for boys, as well as girls, depended on specific mental health conditions and time periods.

"These [sex differences](#) might represent differences in need, recognition and health care-seeking behavior," the report authors wrote.

More information: Visit the U.S. National Institute for Mental Health for more on [eating disorders](#).

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