

Risk Factors for Adolescent Substance Use Disorder

What is a risk factor?

As defined by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), risk factors are “characteristics at the biological, psychological, family, community, or cultural level that precede and are associated with a higher likelihood of negative outcomes.”

These factors may be:

- **Familial risk factors such as:**
 - Childhood maltreatment (such as abuse or neglect).
 - Family history of substance use or substance use disorder.
 - Parent marital status.
 - Parental education level.
 - Favorable parental attitudes towards substance use.
 - Poor parental monitoring.
 - Family rejection of an adolescent’s sexual orientation or gender identity.
 - Home conflict or hostility in the home environment.
- **Social risk factors such as:**
 - Association with deviant peers or peers who use substances.
 - Peer pressure and perceived popularity.
 - Bullying or peer rejection.
- **Lack of school connectedness.**
- **Low academic achievement.**
- **Already occurring mental health issues.**
- **Poverty.**
- **Traumatic experiences.**

Sources

- <https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/20190718-samhsa-risk-protective-factors.pdf>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyouth/substance-use/index.htm>
- <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4008086/>
- <https://youth.gov/youth-topics/risk-and-protective-factors>