

## **Drugs and untreated mental health issues are killing America's kids. You can help stop it.**

*USA Today, July 2023*

*Dr. Rahul Gupta and Dr. Vivek Murthy*

Every day brings more evidence that our nation's youth are facing a [mental health crisis](#): rates of depression, anxiety and suicidal thoughts among young people are on the rise, and so are adolescent deaths from drug poisoning.

By late 2021, the number of adolescents dying from drug poisoning each month had [more than doubled](#), with 84% of these deaths involving illicit fentanyl, including fake prescription pills. Two out of every 5 of these young people also had mental health issues.

Yet in 2021, almost none of the people ages 12-17 who had both a mental health condition and a substance use disorder [received care for both conditions](#). Stigma against these conditions, barriers to care and families not knowing where to turn for help all played a role.

As physicians, we've seen how the twin crises of untreated mental illness and unsafe substance use are killing young people and tearing families apart across America. These are driven by the deadliest drug supply we've ever seen and the fact that too few young people have access to the prevention and care that we know can help.

It has, simply put, left too many parents, siblings, families and friends grieving loved ones and trying to understand how these tragedies could have been prevented.

Addressing both mental health and substance use is a top priority for President Joe Biden, and he has taken key actions to increase access to lifesaving public health services and invested billions of dollars in communities to address mental health and substance use. In fact, when he announced a [Unity Agenda for the nation](#), he focused on key issues both Democrats and Republicans can come together to solve, and mental health and the opioid epidemic were on of the list.

That's because mental health and substance use disorder aren't red state or blue state issues. They aren't racial or gender, urban or rural, or rich or poor issues. They're America's issues. And if you're a parent, an educator, a pediatrician or just concerned about the young people in your life, you can take action, too.

### **1- MENTAL HEALTH**

**America's youth and the challenges to their mental health**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y-6wx55je2M&t=30s>

**ER doctors struggle amid rising mental health concerns in children**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sSjTTM50e6Y>

**Utah governor signs law to restrict social media access for kids and teens**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gArFpd42xSU>

## **2- OPIOID CRISIS**

**The Opioid Crisis explained in under 5 minutes**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s0Olpr0xA4Y>

**Fentanyl: What is it, and why is it so dangerous?**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zULhcobhhks>

**Fentanyl: Why are so many Americans dying from synthetic opioids? - BBC News**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lmxF2owm3Gg>

## **GOING FURTHER**

**Anxious Nation | Official Trailer**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OWzUWmRqJ8w&t=219s>

**Painkiller/OFFICIAL TRAILER**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=24-YonhNS0Y>

## **WRITING**

*What are the two main public health issues facing the USA currently ? (Facts, figures, ...)*

*How can these epidemics be explained ?*

*How have federal and local authorities answered to these issues ?*

*In your opinion, what do these epidemics tell us about the United States of America ?*