

Licking Memorial Health Systems

Quality Report Card



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PEDIATRIC CARE

Talking to Teens about Substance Use

Adolescence can be a difficult time for both children and parents. It is a time for teens to establish their identities and test the limits of parental control. Some of those limits can be risky, such as experimenting with drug and alcohol use. Research suggests that individuals who begin using substances at a younger age are more likely to develop substance use disorders later in life. Parents can help prevent teen drug abuse by having conversations about the consequences of using drugs and the importance of making safe/sound choices.

Common risk factors that may place children at risk for developing substance use problems include a lack of parental supervision and monitoring, family history of substance abuse, a lack of communication and interaction between parents and children, poorly defined rules and expectations about substance use, and family conflict. Mental or behavioral health conditions, such as depression and anxiety, are also risk factors for substance use.

The COVID-19 pandemic raised concerns about the mental health and social well-being of adolescents, including the potential for increased substance use. When the pandemic began, many states initiated rules and guidelines in attempts to curb the spread of the disease. Mitigation efforts included lockdowns, limiting social gatherings, school shutdowns, remote learning, and restricted access to entertainment venues and restaurants. Youth faced limited opportunities to interact with friends resulting in increased feelings of loneliness due to prolonged social isolation.

Clinical depression, suicidal ideation, and anxiety, which also had the potential to be contributing factors in increased substance use behavior among children and teens, were unintended consequences of the mitigation efforts used to reduce the spread of COVID-19. While studies show that overall drug use remained stable during the first six months of the pandemic for children ages 10 to 14, substance use was higher among teens whose families experienced a loss of income, marital hardships, or other stressors due to the pandemic.

Parents are the biggest influence in their children's lives. Although teens tend to pull away from their parents and desire to experience their own independence, they still want and need their parents to be involved in their lives. Initiating a conversation about substance use can be challenging for parents; however, providing a firm foundation and clear message about the damage that drug use can cause is critical to preventing teen substance abuse.

While abstinence from substance use is the best decision for teen health, parents should set clear rules and expectations about substance use to help give teens the structure they need to stay safe. It is important for adolescents to understand that the rules and expectations their parents set regarding drug use are done out of love and concern for the child's well-being.

Parents who stay involved in their children's activities are more likely to develop a strong relationship with their teens. Sharing quality time together,

asking questions about their day, and interacting with teens' friends and parents are helpful ways to remain aware of what is happening in their teen's life. It is important for parents to provide support and guidance for their children and let them know that they can talk to their parents about drugs and alcohol without judgment or blame.

Knowing the signs and symptoms of addiction can help parents identify problematic behavior and seek help for their child. Some types of behaviors that could indicate teen drug abuse include avoiding eye contact, acting irresponsibly, frequently asking for money, stealing, isolating from others, decline in academics, and losing interest in hobbies or activities. Physical indicators of possible substance use include poor hygiene, glazed or bloodshot eyes, changes in mood or attitude, frequent nosebleeds, difficulty focusing, small track marks on arms or legs, and rapid weight gain or loss.

Treatment is recommended for teens who are already experiencing problems with substance use. Parents who suspect their child could have a substance use problem should contact their healthcare provider. Pathways of Central Ohio provides many mental health and addiction service resources in Licking County that can assist with finding a treatment program that is appropriate for adolescents. Parents can visit pathwaysofcentralohio.com for more information.

Patient Story – Willow Crawford



Willow Crawford is described by her mother, Bianca, as a very active, fearless, outgoing two-year-old who enjoys playing outdoors. She is spunky, funny, and often appears to have the strength of a 10-year-old. In May 2022, while putting Willow to bed, Bianca and her husband, Kevin, made a startling discovery. They noticed she had tiny blisters on her back with a ring around it that made it look like a target or bullseye. Unsure of what the rash might be, Bianca decided to mark the area and wait until morning to determine if the rash had spread.

“When I checked Willow in the morning, instead of a number of small blisters, there was one, very large blister. I called Licking Memorial Pediatrics – Tamarack right away to schedule a visit with one of the providers there,” Bianca recalled. “I had no idea what could have caused the rash.”

Willow and her siblings are patients of Richard A. Baltisberger, M.D. When he is not available, appointments are scheduled with the other providers at the location including Hanaa Abdelmessih, M.D., Shelley A. Gittens, M.D., Jimisha Patel, M.D., Theresa M. Blanchard, APRN-CNP, Adrian Leibas, APRN-CNP, and Kelly R. Morrison, APRN-CNP. Bianca says all of the providers have been involved in Willow’s care over the past several months.

Upon examining the rash, the physician advised Bianca that Willow most likely had been bitten by a spider or a tick. It was suggested to take blood samples for testing to determine if Willow had Lyme disease, which is caused by the bacterium *Borrelia burgdorferi* and transmitted to humans through the bite of infected blacklegged

ticks – also known as deer ticks. Typical symptoms include fever, headache, fatigue, and a characteristic skin rash called erythema migrans. If left untreated, infection can spread to joints, the heart, and the nervous system.

At the time, the test was inconclusive; however, Willow was prescribed an antibiotic. After a week, Bianca found a red ring covering Willow’s entire back. She also noticed that Willow appeared to be experiencing hallucinations. “She would get out of bed and ask us to go get her Uncle Terry, who was not staying with us at the time.” Bianca scheduled another appointment with Licking Memorial Pediatrics. Willow’s blood was tested a second time, and Bianca was informed the results were positive for Lyme disease. Antibodies can take several weeks to develop, so patients may first test negative soon after infection.

“We were surprised when they told us the disease came from a tick,” Bianca remembered. “We did not find a tick on Willow or the other children. I was told that is not unusual because the tick will feed, then fall off when it is full.”

Also, most humans are infected through the bites of immature ticks called nymphs. Nymphs are tiny and difficult to see. They are typically more active during the spring and summer months. Adult ticks can also transmit Lyme disease bacteria, but they are much larger and more likely to be discovered and removed before transmitting the bacteria. Adult blacklegged ticks are most active during the cooler months of the year.

After Willow completed the course of antibiotics prescribed, Bianca hoped the symptoms would subside. Weeks later, Willow cut her foot and required stitches. During the follow-up visit to have the stitches removed, Dr. Gittens noticed the familiar bullseye rash on Willow’s back.

“Dr. Gittens was so kind and went out of her way to connect us with a Lyme disease specialist at Nationwide Children’s Hospital,” Bianca shared. “She said she would call me as soon as she had the specialist’s information, which was just minutes after we left the office.”

The specialist explained that although most cases of Lyme disease can be cured with antibiotics, patients can sometimes have symptoms of pain, fatigue, or difficulty thinking that lasts for more than 6 months after completing treatment. The condition is referred to as Post-Treatment Lyme Disease Syndrome (PTLDS). Some experts believe that *Borrelia burgdorferi* can trigger an “auto-immune” response causing symptoms that last well after the infection itself is gone. Patients with PTLDS usually improve over time, but it may take months to feel completely well. It was recommended that Bianca closely monitor Willow’s symptoms and be aware of pain in the tendons, muscles, joints, and bones.

“Willow did have some episodes of leg pain. She would hold her leg, or even scream because it hurt so bad,” Bianca said.

Follow-up appointments with the physicians have been scheduled, but determining whether or not the disease has been cured can be difficult. Blood tests for Lyme disease could continue to return positive results because antibodies developed to fight the disease normally persist in the blood for months or even years after the infection is gone. Bianca continues to monitor Willow’s health for flare-ups, but says Willow has, for the most part, returned to her happy, active self. She has also been more vigilant about checking her other children, Isabella and Zachariah Dailey, and Jordyen, Paisley, and Westyn Crawford, after they have been outside playing.

Lyme disease cases are increasing in Ohio as the range of blacklegged tick populations continues to expand in the state and

Patient Story (continued on back page)

Pediatric Care – How do we compare?

At Licking Memorial Health Systems (LMHS), we take pride in the care we provide. To monitor the quality of that care, we track specific quality measures and compare to benchmark measures. Then, we publish the information so you can draw your own conclusions regarding your healthcare choices.

1. Immunizations are one of the safest and most effective methods to protect children from potentially serious childhood diseases. Licking Memorial Health Professionals (LMHP) monitor the percentage of children, aged 19 months to 35 months, who receive the individual and complete set of recommended immunizations. The series is frequently referred to as the 4:3:1:3:3:1 series. It consists of the following vaccines:

- 4 doses of diphtheria, tetanus (lockjaw), and pertussis (whooping cough)
- 3 doses of polio
- 1 dose of measles, mumps and rubella
- 3 doses of Haemophilus influenzae B (influenza type B)
- 3 doses of hepatitis B
- 1 dose of varicella (chicken pox)

	LMHP 2019	LMHP 2020	LMHP 2021	National
Childhood immunization rate (4:3:1:3:3:1 series)	82%	82%	77%*	70% ⁽¹⁾
Children, aged 6 months to 18 years, receiving the influenza vaccination	33%	30%	32%	63% ⁽²⁾

*In 2021, concerns stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic led to a decrease in well-child visits and vaccinations.

2. LMHP providers follow Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommended vaccinations to prevent cervical cancer, varicella (chicken pox) and meningitis among adolescents. (In 2019, the parameters for the HPV vaccination series were changed from females, aged 13 to 17, to persons, aged 11 through 26. The vaccine can be administered to both females and males starting at age 9, and those who have not been adequately vaccinated may still receive the vaccination series until age 26.)

	LMHP 2019	LMHP 2020	LMHP 2021	National
Persons aged 11 through 26 completing HPV vaccination series	53%	54%	61%	54% ⁽³⁾
Adolescent children receiving varicella vaccination	95%	96%	91%	90% ⁽³⁾
Adolescent children receiving meningococcal vaccination	90%	89%	83%	87% ⁽³⁾

3. Pharyngitis (sore throat) is a common illness in children. Most children's sore throats are caused by viral illnesses. While antibiotics are needed to treat bacterial pharyngitis, such are not useful in treating viral pharyngitis. Before antibiotics are prescribed, a simple diagnostic test needs to be performed to confirm the presence of a bacterial infection. Inappropriate use of antibiotics for viral pharyngitis is costly, ineffective and contributes to the development of drug-resistant bacterial strains. LMHP monitors and reports how many children with sore throats, aged 2 to 18 years of age, received a Group A streptococcus test before they were given a prescription for antibiotics.

	LMHP 2019	LMHP 2020	LMHP 2021	National
Children with pharyngitis receiving test before antibiotics	97%	93%	87%	84% ⁽²⁾

4. Kids' Place is an accredited child advocacy center that provides a comprehensive, multi-disciplinary evaluation of children who are suspected victims of sexual and/or physical abuse and/or neglect. Services are provided in a comfortable and confidential environment. Case management and victim advocate services are also available.

	LMH 2019	LMH 2020	LMH 2021	LMH Goal
Total number of children served	187	179	178	N/A

Data Footnotes:

- (1) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Immunization Survey, Vaccination Coverage Among Children Aged 19-35 Months – United States, 2017.
 (2) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Immunization Survey, "Flu Vaccination Coverage, United States, 2018-2019 Influenza Season," updated September 26, 2019.
 (3) Estimated Vaccination Coverage with Selected Vaccines and Doses Among Adolescents Aged 13-17, by age at interview; National Immunization Survey-Teen (NIS-Teen), United States, 2018.

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human encounters occur more frequently, particularly in the insect's preferred forest habitats. Reported cases have increased from approximately 67 cases in 2012 to 582 cases in 2021, according to the Ohio Department of Health. Most cases go unreported. Anyone who spends time outdoors can be at risk for Lyme disease. The blacklegged tick is most often found in wooded, brushy areas, but can be found in tall grass and leaf litter around houses.

Reducing exposure to ticks is the best prevention for Lyme disease. The Centers

for Disease Control and Prevention suggests using Environmental Protection Agency-registered insect repellents containing DEET, picaridin, essential oils including lemon or eucalyptus, para-menthane-diol, or 2-undecanone. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that products with no more than 30 percent DEET be used on children two months of age and older. Permethrin kills ticks on contact, but should only be used to treat clothing. If using an aerosol spray on a child, ensure the child is holding their breath. Do not apply repellent directly onto a child's face. Instead, place

the repellent in your hands and carefully apply avoiding the eyes and mouth.

Wearing long pants and shirts with long sleeves minimizes the amount of exposed skin. Also, it is easier to detect a tick on light-colored clothing. Shower as soon as possible after spending time outdoors, and check for ticks daily. Ticks can hide under the armpits, behind the knees, in the hair, and in the groin.

LMHS Events Promote Youth Health and Wellness

Licking Memorial Health Systems (LMHS) offers several free community events and activities to promote health and well-being for youth in Licking County. Below are a few of the programs that parents and children can participate in throughout the year.

The Active•Fit program promotes healthy lifestyles for youth, ages 6 to 12, by introducing the benefits of exercise, healthy eating, and proper rest. The program consists of three periods that are four months long. During each period, youth select four "active" category goals and four "fit" goals and can log their progress on the ActiveFit.org website. When all goals have been accomplished for each period, participants are automatically entered into a drawing to win great prizes. Activities and events are held throughout the year to help them achieve their goals, including Active•Fit Junior Chef, Active•Fit & Active•Senior Bowling, Active•Fit Mini-triathlon, and Active•Fit Field Day. For more information about the program, visit ActiveFit.org.

Each spring, LMHS hosts an annual Sports Screening Program for Licking County students entering grades 7 through 12 who are involved in sports, marching band, and C-TEC's Criminal Justice, Fire, and Physical Therapy programs. The program offers comprehensive screenings at no cost to help youth safely participate in physically-challenging activities. The LMHS Sports Screening Program consists of three components: Heart to Play electrocardiogram and echocardiograms, ImpACT (Immediate Post-concussion Assessment and Cognitive Testing) baseline concussion testing, and state-required pre-participation physical examinations. It is important to note that the Sports Screening Program only includes a small portion of what is covered at a child's annual well check and is not intended to replace it. For more information about the program, visit LMHealth.org/SportsScreenings.

LMHS also offers three one-day summer camps for youth, ages 7 to 12. Each event features fun and educational activities and allows participants to interact with other

kids who share their condition. Camp Feelin' Fine helps children with asthma learn how to manage their symptoms. Children who have diabetes can attend Camp A1C to learn more about their disease. Camp Courage is for children who have had an encounter with cancer through a friend or family member. All camps are free of charge, but registration is required.

Be Wise...Immunize is a free flu vaccination clinic for Licking County Youth that is held in the fall at various LMHS facilities. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that children, ages 6 months and older, receive an annual flu vaccine, ideally before the height of influenza activity, which begins in October and continues through May. Be Wise...Immunize invites infants and youth up to age 18 to receive a free flu vaccine at this special event. Scrubs, the LMHS mascot, makes an appearance to provide encouragement and ease anxiety. Refreshments and prizes are also provided.



Licking Memorial Health Systems

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Please take a few minutes to read this month's report on **Pediatric Care**. You will soon discover why Licking Memorial Health Systems is measurably different ... for your health!

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