The younger a person is when they first begin substance use, the more likely they are to develop a disorder. There are many reasons for this - one is that the human brain undergoes dramatic changes during adolescence, which continue into early adulthood. Teens’ brains are especially at risk because they are still maturing.

To counter this risk, protect your loved ones and look out for the teens in your life. Talk to them about the impact of drugs and alcohol on their brain development and addiction risk.

Addiction risk can be inherited. Genetics account for up to 60% of a person’s risk. But, just because someone in your family has struggled with addiction does not mean that you are destined to do the same.

To counter this risk, understand your family history and share this knowledge with others in your family who might be impacted.

Environmental risks are elements in a person’s surroundings that increase their likelihood of addiction. A chaotic home and family life, easy availability of drugs, social stressors such as abuse or violence, peer influence and poor school performance all have an impact.

To counter this risk, provide a nurturing home environment with clear rules of conduct for the teens in your life. Also be aware of your own professional and personal surroundings that might encourage use.

Research shows that addiction risk increases when multiple risk factors are present. Anyone can develop an addiction. It can be deadly. Common sense preventive steps are important for everyone.