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# SCIENCE WORLD REPORT

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## Why Teen Boys Take Risks: New Studies Examine the Teenage Brain

By Catherine Griffin



Teen Boy

Why is it that teen boys seem to take more risks? There may actually be a biological explanation for it. Scientists have taken a closer look at specific brain mechanisms that may help explain what might be going on inside juvenile male brains.

"Psychologists, psychiatrists, educators, neuroscientists, criminal justice professionals and parents are engaged in a daily struggle to understand and solve the enigma of teenage risky behaviors," said Pradeep Bhide, one of the researchers, [in a news release](#). "Such behaviors impact not only the teenagers who obviously put themselves at serious and lasting risk but also families and societies in general." In this case, researchers conducted a series of 19 studies that approached the question of why teen boys behavior erratically. There were several findings that explained why teens act the way they do.

For example, the researchers found that unlike children or adults, teen boys show enhanced activity in the part of the brain that controls emotions when confronted with a threat. In fact, the level of activity in

the limbic brain region in teens in reaction to a threat was strikingly different than from that found in adult men.

The scientists also found that teen boys are mostly immune to the threat of punishment, but hypersensitive to the possibility of large gains from gambling. They also discovered that a molecule known to be vital in developing fear of dangerous situations is less active in adolescent male brains.

"The new studies illustrate the neurobiological basis of some of the more unusual but well-known behaviors exhibited by our teenagers," said Bhide. "Stress, hormonal changes, complexities of psychosocial environment and peer-pressure all contribute to the challenges of assimilation faced by teenagers. These studies attempt to isolate, examine and understand some of these potential causes of a teenager's complex conundrum."

The findings are published in a special volume of [\*Developmental Neuroscience\*](#).

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