



### Injury Prevention



The most common accidents that occur at this age:

- **Helmet:** Helmets should be worn for bike riding, skiing, scooters, roller-blading and skateboarding.
- **Fires:** Have a fire escape plan. Check smoke and carbon monoxide detector batteries during clock changes (twice a year).
- **Car Safety:** Use seatbelts. Place the shoulder strap in the proper position. We recommend that children less than 13 years ride in the back seat

### Nutrition

Make mealtime family time. Turn off the TV, and have pleasant conversation at mealtime. It is still very important to encourage and model 3 servings of vegetables and 2 servings of fruits per day.

- Provide 3 meals a day and make sure to not skip breakfast. Studies show children who have had breakfast perform better in school.
- Limit the amount of 100% juice to no more than 8 ounces. If you chose to give unhealthy snacks, aim for 2 servings or less per week.

### Healthy Habits



Check screen time for sexual content, violence, smoking, or other inappropriate behaviors.

- If your water does not contain fluoride, your child should be taking 1 mg a day until all adult teeth are in.
- Use sunscreen. Skin cancer is most related to the number of sunburns children get before the age of 20.
- Promote and teach your child to exercise 1 hour daily

### Parenting

Responsibility for choices and actions are most accepted if parents show they are responsible for their own actions. Model this and discuss your child’s actions and choices and how they are accountable.

- Make sure your child has chores and responsibility.

### Puberty

Puberty can begin as early as eight years old for girls and nine years old for boys. Discuss puberty and sexuality with your children, and

answer their questions directly and honestly.

#### Body Changes for Young Women

- Breast Development 8-13 years old
- Pubic Hair: 8-14 years old
- Growth Spurt: 9½ - 14½ years old
- Menstruation: 10 – 16½ years old

#### Body Changes for Young Men

- Testicle Growth: 9 – 18 years old
- Pubic Hair: 9 – 18 years old
- Growth Spurt: 9½ - 17½ years old
- Penis Growth: 10 – 17 years old

### Psychological Changes

There are many significant body image issues that teens struggle with at this time. Some common themes that teens go through, include some of the following:

1. **Who Am I?** This includes being aware of self-image, aware of talents and weaknesses; and questioning of parental values.
2. **How Am I Different?** This occurs as teens struggle to become more independent.
3. **Who Are My Friends?** Many teens seek to become psychologically emancipated from their parents as they immerse themselves in peer relationships.

## 2

4. **What Will I Be?** This includes concern about future plans, jobs, college, joining clubs etc.

These are some parenting tips to guide parents through this process:

- **Treat your teenager with mutual respect, support, and having fun together.** Try to have relaxed casual conversation every day. Use praise and trust to help build your child's self-esteem. Listen carefully and try to make comments that don't judge or criticize.
- **Avoid criticism about "no-win" topics:** Talking, dressing, and acting differently from adults helps make your teenager feel independent. Avoid too much criticism of clothes, hairstyles, music, and friends. Allowing your teen to rebel in these areas prevents testing in other areas, such as drugs, shoplifting, or truancy. Intervene if behavior is harmful, illegal, or infringes on your rights.
- **Let society's rules and consequences teach responsibility outside the home:** Your teenager must learn from trial and error (except for dangerous or illegal activities).
- **Clarify house rules and consequences for breaking them:** Consequences may include loss of telephone, TV, or stereo privileges.
- **Use family conferences to negotiate house rules.**
- **Give space to a teenager who is in a bad mood.**
- **Be a good adult role model.**

Adapted from *Your Child's Health* by Barton Schmitt, MD with author's permission.

## Special Topics

Peer pressure should be discussed in relation to drugs, alcohol, smoking and dangerous activities.

"Everybody does it" is the battle cry. Let your child know that there are plenty of other kids who do not want to take risks with their bodies and the rules. Encourage your child to come up with fun and safe alternatives or stay busy with clubs or sports, so that boredom does not tempt them to do unsafe or unhealthy activities.

Conflict resolution is another important concept to discuss. Let your child know that when they feel threatened by words or actions of someone else, how they respond defines whether the situation becomes a real conflict. Teach them that they can become assertive and stick up for their rights by using words and staying calm. Ask them to try to restate the problem as the other person sees it (try to see THEIR point of view) and then explain how YOU see it. Discuss the use of "I statements" to explain how you feel (like "I feel upset when you say that about me. I don't want to argue about this".)

## Recommended Reading



*Your Child's Health*, Barton Schmitt, MD, Bantam Books. Excellent well rounded book on children of all ages. Very practical with an excellent section on how to live with a teenager.

*The Care & Keeping of You 2- The body book for older girls* - details about the physical and emotional changes girls are going through including periods, growing body, peer pressure, personal care and more.

## The Wellness Times

*The Teenage Body Book Guide*, Kathy McCoy and Charles Wibbelsman, Pocket Books. Describes the physical and emotional development of teenagers of both sexes. Answers hundreds of questions sent in by teenagers. One of the best books available for teenagers.

*Parenting Teenagers: Systematic Training for Effective Parenting*, Don Dinkmeyer and Gary D. McKay, AGS, American Guidance Services. Practical and usable insights into parent/teen relations. This book show parents how to encourage independence with responsibility, mutual respect and cooperation, self-confidence and self-esteem.

*Get Out of My Life, But First Take Cheryl and Me to The Mall*, Tony Wolfe. The many challenges posed by living with a teenager are presented along with practical advice. Numerous realistic, yet comical, scenarios are offered.

## Next Visit



We recommend annual preventive exams. School physicals do not meet this need. Starting around age 12, we start to see pre-teens alone during their visit. This is a time to begin a transition to gaining more responsibility both at home and in the your child's medical home.