
YOUR TEENAGER AT 11-14 YEARS

I. DIET

- A. A healthy diet is sometimes a challenge at this age, but it is worth the effort. Breakfast is an important meal that should not be skipped no matter how rushed you and your teen are in the morning. Encourage your teenager to limit fat and sugar and help him/her choose healthier snacks.
- B. Teens need 1300 mg of calcium a day. That's four servings of low fat milk, cheese, yogurt, or juice with calcium. You can give him/her a calcium supplement (Tums or Viactiv equal 500 mg calcium each) if not enough is consumed in the diet.
- C. If your son or daughter is not getting a balanced diet on a daily basis, then the addition of a vitamin supplement is indicated.

II. SLEEP

- A. Teenagers often do not get enough sleep. They still need at least 9 hours of sleep each night.
- B. Sufficient sleep is essential for optimal school performance so insist on a consistent, and reasonable, bedtime.

III. DEVELOPMENT

- A. Puberty brings many changes to your child's life. Continue to spend private time with them to discuss things that they feel are important in their lives right now. Your teen's concerns about emerging sexuality, appearing different from friends, and changing schools are real problems and deserve your attention.
- B. During the early teen years "fitting in" with friends is a controlling influence. Counteract peer influence with parent influence.
- C. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends a total of 60 minutes or more of daily physical activity, the majority of which should be either moderate- or vigorous-intensity physical activity at least 3 days per week. Examples of aerobic activity include brisk walking, running, skipping, dancing, bicycling, jumping rope, and swimming.
- D. Discuss feelings and behaviors that contribute to your teen's emotional well being. Be alert to signs of stress: decreased school performance, change in sleep or eating patterns, nightmares, outbursts, hopelessness, withdrawal, loss of friends or new circle of friends, school absenteeism. If you have any concerns, please schedule a consult with one of us.

IV. SAFETY

- A. You and your child should always wear a seatbelt.
- B. Even though the law implies that teenagers over the age of 12 years do not need to wear a helmet, everyone who skates, rides, skis or snowboards needs to wear one. Young people of this age often feel invincible and will need you to be firm on their use of a helmet.
- C. Periodically review and update your house rules and your teen's responsibilities regarding chores, homework, time limit on T.V., computer, and video games, and curfew on school and weekend nights. Check out the video games that your child is playing. Games rated M (mature) can be very violent and are not appropriate for this age group.
- D. Teenagers who use alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs typically begin before leaving the ninth grade! Discuss risky behaviors with your teenager. Be sure that family discussions about drugs emphasize the immediate, unpleasant effects of alcohol and other drug use. Get to know your teen's friends and their parents. Work together to develop rules about activities and stick to them. Know where your teen is at all times. Last minute changes in plans should not be permitted unless he/she checks with you first.
- E. Remind your teen to always use sunscreen. Sunburns now greatly increase the chances of skin cancer as an adult. An SPF of 30 is usually sufficient.
- F. Know what your teen is doing on the web. The computer should be in a public area of the house so that you can monitor its use. Talk with your teen about the dangers of chat rooms. People met online are strangers. If your teen has a social media account (i.e. Facebook), insist that they let you review their page at anytime to monitor their behavior.
- G. We will be addressing sexually transmitted diseases with your teen at this visit.
- H. Be alert for signs of the choking game, which is an intentional stoppage of blood flow to the brain to cause a brief high. Signs include marks/bruises on the throat, redness of the eyes, frequent severe headaches; belts/ropes/shoelaces tied in strange knots or found in unusual locations, and disorientation after being alone. The choking game can cause strokes, seizures and death. For more info: www.stop-the-choking-game.com.

- I. Monitor cell phone use. Frequent use decreases the time that teens can interact directly with friends...actually contributing to a loss of social skills. Cell phone use can result in a failure to heed physical surroundings (i.e. distraction while crossing a street), interruption of school work; less family time; uncharacteristic brazenness (saying things via text that wouldn't be said in person). Set limits on your teen's use of their cell phone and discuss appropriate use. Talk to your teen about sexting. Sexting causes emotional pain and is illegal, resulting in police involvement and school suspension.

V. OTHER

- A. We recommend annual wellness exams.
- B. A Pertussis/Tetanus/Diphtheria booster and meningitis vaccine are required between 11 and 14 years of age.