
YOUR TEENAGER AT 15-18 YEARS

I. DIET

- A. Even though your teen is busy with outside activities and friends, regular family meals are a good way to encourage healthy eating and staying connected.
- B. Most teenagers do not get enough calcium in their diets. Your teen needs 1,300mg of calcium daily (3-4 servings of low fat milk, cheese, yogurt, or juice with calcium). A calcium supplement may also be used. Encourage your teen to cut back on soda; it decreases the calcium in their bones.
- C. Breakfast is still an important start to the day. Too many teens skip breakfast. Make sure yours has a healthy start.

II. SLEEP

- A. Most teens are so busy that they don't get enough sleep. Your teen needs 8-9 hours of sleep a night. They may need help organizing their activities in order to maintain a consistent and reasonable bedtime.
- B. Drinking beverages with caffeine in the afternoon and evening may make it difficult for your teen to fall asleep.

III. DEVELOPMENT

- A. High school students are future-oriented and can engage in abstract thinking; however, they still tend to regard themselves as invincible. They have an increasingly realistic understanding of adults. Young people, therefore, want adults to discuss their concerns and the ways they solve problems and make decisions. At the same time, teenagers continue to be group-oriented, and belonging to the group motivates much of their behavior and actions.
- B. Your teen should be physically active daily, with more vigorous activity for at least 30 minutes, three to four times a week. Whether your teen is well coordinated or a little awkward, they can find an activity that fits their abilities and interests.
- C. Continue to keep the lines of communication open with your teen. Watch for signs of significant stress: decreased school performance or absenteeism, change in eating/sleeping habits, irritability, hopelessness, anger, loss of friends, or isolation/withdrawal. If you observe these or any other concerning behaviors in your teen, please schedule a consult with one of us.

IV. SAFETY

- A. Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for 15-20 year olds. Remind your teen of the importance of using a seatbelt. Your driving teen is more likely to be in an accident if there are other teens in the car. Set limits on the number of teens that can travel in a car together: with each additional person, there is an increased risk of distraction and crashes. Per mile driven, the nighttime fatal crash rate for 16-year-olds is about twice the rate during the day. Remind your teen never to get in a car with a driver who is not 100% sober no matter how short the distance. Offer to pick your teen up, no questions asked, if there isn't a safe ride home. Teenage drivers should carry a cell phone, but neither make nor take calls while driving. Pull over to a safe area out of traffic to use the cell phone. And **no one** should ever text while driving.
- B. Discuss avoidance of risky behaviors. Your teen should understand both the immediate and long-term physical effects of tobacco, alcohol, and drugs, as well as the possibly fatal effects of combining drugs. Your teen probably knows people who drink or use drugs. Talk about how alcohol and other drug use threatens lives and may limit opportunities for the future. All parties your teen attends should have adult supervision. Drinking cups should never be put down; there are too many flavorless drugs that can be unknowingly added to take any chances. Date rape is not an uncommon occurrence.
- C. Among high school students, 19% report daily use of cigarettes. Talk to your teen about addiction, the power of nicotine and how hard it is to quit smoking. If your teen is already smoking, he or she will need constructive help in order to quit.
- D. Continue to monitor what your teen is doing on the web. Strangers that they meet online can be dangerous. Remind your teen never to give out personal information. Discuss appropriate use of social sites such as Facebook. Pictures and comments posted online are there forever. Cyber-bullying can have drastic effects so any known or suspected cyber-bullying should be taken seriously and reported to school or law enforcement authorities.
- E. Work with your teen to set limits on screen time. Generally, 3 hours a day is more than sufficient. Check out the video games your teen is playing. Games rated M can be incredibly violent. Decide with your teen what is appropriate.
- F. 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 but should be re-applied after swimming.

- G. Make sure your teen knows what your values are regarding sex. Few teens will want to discuss all their thoughts and concerns with their parents. They will often turn to their friends for advice – much of which will be inaccurate. If your teen doesn't raise sexual matters with you, then it is important for you to introduce the topic from time to time. This not only helps to correct misinformation, but also makes it more likely that your teen will come to you with any questions or problems. By the time teens graduate from High School 75% have had sex! We will be addressing sexually transmitted diseases with your teen at today's 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. Guns should always be stored locked and unloaded with the ammunition locked up separately.
- J. Talk to your teen about cell phone use in general. One in five teens participates in "sexting". Discuss the emotional pain this can cause. Sexting is illegal and has serious consequences involving police records and school suspensions.

V. OTHER

- A. Annual wellness exams are still recommended.
- B. We will be evaluating your teen's vaccination history and administer any necessary vaccines and perform any needed routine lab work at today's visit.