



Parenting

The natural changes your teen goes through during adolescence can be hard for both you and your teen. Your love and guidance during this time can help your teen make good choices.

- It's normal for teens to want more independence. Recognize that your teen may be less willing to be involved in some family activities and may start to challenge your authority.
- Respect your teen's need for privacy. Be open with your teen if you have safety concerns.
- Be flexible. Allow your teen to test, explore, and communicate within limits, but stay firm and consistent.
- Establish realistic family rules, giving your teen more responsibility as he/she seems ready. Set clear limits and consequences if rules are broken.

- Help build your teen's confidence by paying attention. When he/she wants to talk, try to stop what you're doing and really listen.
- Along with your teen, decide which activities are okay to do on his/her own, such as staying home alone or going out with friends who drive.
- Spend personal, fun time with your teen. Try to keep a sense of humor and praise positive behaviors.
- If you're having trouble getting along with your teen, try talking with other parents or a counselor.

Safety

Accidents, such as alcohol-related car accidents, are a major killer of teens. Parents can help prevent accidents by giving clear and consistent messages, as well as enforcing basic safety rules. Try to set a good example. Your teen looks to you as a role model.

- It's safest not to have a gun in the house. If you do own a gun, unload it and lock it up.
- Make sure your teen wears protective pads and a properly fitting helmet when riding a bike, scooter, or when skateboarding or rollerblading or for any contact sports.
- Discourage underage drinking at home or at other locations. Underage drinking is not only illegal, it can contribute to risky behaviors, such as drinking and driving or unsafe sexual activity.
- Set a good example. Help your teen stay safe while driving on the road:
 1. Wear your seat belt.
 2. Do not use your cell phone to talk or text.
 3. Do not drink and drive.

Nutrition

You can help your child stay healthy and get more energy by serving nutritious meals and encouraging regular physical activity.

- Your teen needs 60 minutes of exercise each day to be healthy.
- Make family meal time a priority. Teens who eat with their families 5 times a week or more eat better and have fewer behavior problems.
- Stock up on fruits and veggies: Your teen needs at least 4 cups every day.
- Limit soda, sports drinks, juice, and sweetened drinks. One can is equal to drinking a candy bar!
- Limit screentime (TV, computers, and video games) to 1 – 2 hours a day.
- Serving 3 cups of milk or other dairy products can help your teen get the cups of calcium needed every day. Calcium-fortified orange juice, *Tums*, or calcium chews are good, too.

Talking about sexuality

Talk with your teen about sexuality, relationships, and responsibility. Share your views about sex, and discuss the potential emotional and physical consequences (such as pregnancy, STDs, and guilt).

1. **Start early.** This will make it less awkward each time.
2. **Start the conversations.** Your teen may be interested, but too embarrassed to ask.
3. **Create an open environment.** Let your teen know that you are always available to talk.
4. **Communicate your values.** Discuss your beliefs so your teen can use your values to develop his/her own set of beliefs.

5. **Listen carefully.** This will reduce confusion and help you understand what's truly on your teen's mind.
6. **Be patient.** Give yourselves time to get comfortable with each other.
7. **Keep talking about it.** Having open discussions where accurate information is shared can reduce your teen's participation in risky behaviors.

Even before your teen is sexually active, it's a good idea to:

- Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of abstinence, condom use, and birth control.
- Talk about the possibility of unwanted pregnancy. If your teen has had unsafe sex, one option is Emergency Contraceptive Pills (ECPs). ECPs can prevent pregnancy if birth control wasn't used; however, ECPs are most useful if started within 72 hours after having sex.
- Inform your teen about chlamydia. This is a common sexually transmitted disease (STD) that can cause infertility if left undetected. Chlamydia screening is recommended for all sexually active young women every year.

School

School is a major part of your teen's life. It's important for parents to stay involved.

- Tell your teen why you think education is important.
- Show interest in your teen's school life and pay attention to grades and attendance problems.
- If there are problems, work with the school staff and your teen to find out what's wrong.
- Encourage your teen to join at least one school activity (such as playing sports or acting in a theatre group). It can help your teen feel connected.

- If your teen is having difficulty, arrange for tutoring or extra help.
- Start talking about your teen's future. Discuss how having a college education will open up opportunities.
- Help your teen learn to manage time and stress.

Medical care for teens

For starters, help your teen choose a doctor or nurse practitioner (NP) to see every one to two years. It's important for teens to see a medical professional they know and trust.

In most cases, your teen needs your permission before seeing a doctor or NP. However, according to California state law, when your child is at least 12 years old, he/she can see a doctor or NP without a parent's permission for these confidential concerns:

- pregnancy/birth control
- sexually transmitted disease
- alcohol or drug use
- personal, school, or family issues

Adolescents need to keep up with their immunizations too.

- California law requires immunization against hepatitis B for school.
- Your teen needs a booster shot to stay protected against tetanus and whooping cough.
- If your teen is entering high school, joining the military, or heading off to college and will be living in a dorm, it is important that they receive the meningococcal vaccine.
- All pre-teen girls should receive 3 doses of the HPV vaccine, which may help prevent cervical cancer. Older teens may benefit from the vaccine as well and should talk to their doctor or Nurse Practitioner to see if it is right for them. The vaccine offers the

most protection when given to girls before they are sexually active, but even if they have already had sex, they might still benefit from the vaccine. Talk to your doctor or NP to see if the HPV vaccine is right for your teen. The HPV vaccine is given in 3 doses. It's important to get all 3 shots. It's still important to get a Pap test, either 3 years after becoming sexually active or when girls turn 18—whichever comes first.

More resources

Web sites

- Kaiser Permanente: kp.org
- KidsHealth College Page kidshealth.org/teen/index.html
- National Health Information Center, USDHS healthfinder.gov
- American Academy for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry: aacap.org
- American Academy of Pediatrics: aap.org
- Children Now: talkingwithkids.org

Books

- *Teens in Turmoil.* Maxym and York.
- *Parenting Teens with Love & Logic.* Cline and Fay.
- *How to Talk So Kids Will Listen...* Faber and Mazlish
- *Understanding Teenage Depression.* Empfield and Bakalan.
- *Teenage Body Book.* McCoy and Wibblesman.

Contact your local Health Education Department or Center.