

Things You Should Know: Your Preteen 12-13 Years

NUTRITION

- It is often a challenge to eat nutritious food from all five food groups every day. Keep healthy food in the house and eat it for meals and snacks. Avoid junk food, excess salt, sugar and fat. Eat fruits and vegetables 5 times every day.
- **It is important for your child to eat a healthy breakfast.** Children who eat breakfast are more likely to have more energy, work faster, be more creative and even do better in school.
- **Avoid energy drinks.** They contain caffeine, sugar and no nutrients. **Limit sugary drinks including juice, soda, sweet tea, Kool-Aid and sports drinks. Water is better than sports drinks while doing sports and exercising.**
- Milk is important for bone growth. **Get three servings a day of milk or high calcium foods.**
- **The major contributors to obesity are 1) sugar-containing drinks 2) fast food 3) large portion sizes and 4) lack of exercise.**

SLEEP

- Adolescents often have erratic sleep patterns but need a **minimum of 8-10 hours of sleep per night.**
- **Excessive sleeping or difficulties falling asleep can be signs of depression.**
- **Turn off all electronic devices at least one hour before bedtime.**

SAFETY

- **It is essential that your child wears a seat belt! The back seat is the safest place for children under 13 years.** Don't leave the driveway until all are buckled up, including you. Set a good example.
- **A helmet should always be worn when riding a bike.**
- Be sure you have working smoke detectors as well as a fire safety plan in place.
- Carbon monoxide detectors are recommended.
- Loud noises can damage your child's hearing through the misuse of headphones.
- Never accept a ride in a car if the driver has been drinking, using drugs or acting recklessly. Do not accept rides from strangers.
- **Children under the age of 16 should not use all-terrain vehicles (four-wheelers).**
- It is dangerous to ride unrestrained in the back of a pickup truck.
- Limit exposure to the sun and use sunscreen.
- Avoid locations where tobacco smoke is present.
- If a gun is kept in a home, keep the gun and ammunition locked up in different locations.
- **Teach your child how to resolve conflicts without violence.**
- Teach your child how to access emergency medical systems.
- If your child is active in sports, injury prevention should include wearing proper equipment and avoiding over-exercising, fatigue and stress.

GOOD HEALTH HABITS

- A healthy weight can be maintained through a good diet, sensible eating habits and routine exercise. Discourage crash diets, medications, laxatives or forced vomiting.
- **Exercise is very important** to keep your child healthy. Children who exercise regularly sleep better, have more energy and build strong bones and muscles. It will also help your child feel good about him or herself.
- Brush teeth twice a day and see the dentist every 6 months.
- **Encourage avoidance of tobacco, vaping, alcohol and drugs. Teach your child how to stand up to peer pressure.**
- Emphasize your child's right to refuse sexual contact and to report sexual abuse.
- Computer gaming addiction is a growing problem and may require a complicated and painful intervention. **For your child to achieve healthy psychological and social development, limit screen time and make sure it is age appropriate. Teach your child about internet safety.**

GOOD PARENTING PRACTICES

- **Establish procedures for making and enforcing family rules. When your child does not follow your family rules, there must be consequences. The punishment should "fit the crime."**
- **Allow your adolescent to make age-appropriate decisions** and selections such as choosing clothes.
- **Spend time with your adolescent and maintain good communication.** Praise and encourage your adolescent's activities at home and outside the home. Attending events in which your child is participating contributes to the child's self-esteem and shows affection.
- Make arrangements for your child's supervision when you are not at home.
- **Respect your child's privacy.**
- Supervise dangerous activities such as power tools, guns and water sports.
- **Play a role in your child's sex education**, perhaps with the aid of books, followed by discussions between you and your child.
- **Encourage abstinence. If your adolescent is sexually active or plans to be, stress the importance of preventing pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases.**
- Encourage independence and responsibility. Assign chores around the house.
- Encourage your child to invite friends to your home. Avoid saying negative things about your child's friends.
- Remember you are the parent. Parents serve as role models for behavior and moral judgment.

IMMUNIZATIONS AND WELL VISITS

- Your child continues to need yearly well visits and may need catch-up doses of the Tdap, Menactra, and HPV vaccines.
- Yearly Flu and COVID-19 vaccines are recommended.

Please call or text the office with any questions or concerns!