

Things You Should Know: Your Teen 14-15 Years

NUTRITION

- It is often a challenge to eat nutritious food from all five food groups every day. Eat healthy food for meals and snacks. Avoid junk food, excess salt, sugar and fat. Eat fruits and vegetables at least five times a day.
- **It is important to eat a healthy breakfast.** Teens 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, Kool-Aid, sweet tea, soda and sports drinks. Water is better than sports drinks while playing sports and exercising.
- Milk is important for bone growth. **Get three servings a day of skim 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 on average **need a minimum of 8 hours of sleep per night.** They often deprive themselves of sleep during the week and catch up on the weekends.
- **Excessive sleeping or difficulties falling and staying asleep can be signs of depression.**
- **Turn off all electronic devices at least one hour before going to bed.**

SAFETY

- **It is essential that everyone wears a seat belt!** Don't leave the driveway until everyone is buckled up.
- 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 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.
- **Teens 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 sun exposure and use sunscreen.**
- Avoid locations where tobacco smoke is present.
- If a gun is kept in a home, the gun and ammunition should be locked up in different locations.
- Learn CPR and know how to access emergency medical systems.
- If you are active in sports, injury prevention should include wearing proper equipment and avoiding over-exercising, fatigue and stress.

GOOD HEALTH HABITS

- Weight can be managed through a good diet, sensible eating habits and routine exercise. Avoid crash diets, medications, laxatives or forced vomiting.
- **Exercise is very important** for good health. Teens who exercise regularly sleep better, have more energy and build strong bones and muscles. It also helps teens feel good about themselves.
- Brush your teeth twice a day and see a dentist every 6 months.
- **Avoid tobacco, vaping, alcohol and drugs.** Stand up to peer pressure. Illicit drugs increase health risks and the risk of death because of the uncertainty of their concentration or composition. Abuse of alcohol and other drugs interferes with a person's judgment and self-control. Driving accidents and drowning frequently occur in individuals who are under the influence. Participating in violent behavior often occurs when the person is under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- Computer gaming addiction is a growing problem. **To achieve healthy psychological and social development, limit screen time and learn about online privacy and safety.**

SEXUAL ACTIVITY

- **Practice sexual abstinence.** You have the right to refuse sexual contact and report sexual abuse.
- **If you are sexually active or plan to be, it is important to take action to prevent pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases.**

GOOD PARENTING PRACTICES

- **Include your teen in establishing and enforcing fair rules for the home.** Discipline of your teen serves as an educational tool, just the same as when they were younger. When your teen does not obey a rule, there must be consequences. The punishment should "fit the crime." Many parents find that grounding is an effective form of discipline.
- **Keep communications open and comfortable.** You can do this by attending events in which your teen is participating and giving praise for your teen's school and extracurricular achievements. Your relationship will also be better if you express appreciation for the teen's contributions at home, such as helping with chores. Despite these efforts, difficulties between a parent and teen are quite common.
- **Continue to play a role in your teen's sex education,** perhaps with the aid of books, followed by discussions between you and your teen.
- **If your teen is sexually active or plans to be, stress the importance of preventing pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections.**
- Parents may feel uncertain about their teen's sexuality and increasing needs for independence from the family. Show respect and confidence in your teen.
- **Encourage independence and responsibility.** Assign chores around the house.
- Encourage your teenager to invite friends to your home but avoid saying negative things about your teenager's friends.
- **Respect your teen's privacy.**
- Adolescents should be encouraged to make age-appropriate decisions and selections, including friends and activities.
- Teach your teen to resolve conflicts without violence.

- Remember you are the parent. Parents serve as role models for behavior and moral judgment and in some cases may need to supervise potentially dangerous activities.

IMMUNIZATIONS AND WELL VISITS

- Your teen continues to need yearly well exams and may need a catch-up dose of the HPV vaccine.
- Yearly Flu and COVID-19 vaccines are recommended.

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