

Things You Should Know: Your Teen 16 years and older

NUTRITION

- It is often a challenge to eat nutritious food from all five food groups every day. Keep healthy food in the house and choose it for meals and snacks. Avoid junk food, excess salt, sugar and fat. Eat fruits and vegetables 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 such as soda, juice, kool-aid, sweet tea and sports drinks.** Water is better than sports drinks when exercising or playing sports.
- 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.** Teens 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.**

SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

- Participate in peer group activities and community involvement. It is important to resist negative peer pressure. It is okay to say "NO."

SAFETY

- **It is essential that you wear a seat belt!** Be aware of the responsibilities of driving a car. Insist that passengers in the car use seat belts. Do not use your cell phone while driving.
- 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. Never drive if you have been drinking or using drugs.** Do not accept rides from strangers.
- 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.
- Learn CPR and 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

- **Exercise is very important** for good health. Teens who exercise regularly sleep better, have more energy and build strong bones and muscles. It also will help you feel good about yourself.
- Weight can be managed through a good diet, sensible eating habits and routine exercise. Avoid crash diets, medications, laxatives or forced vomiting.
- Brush your teeth twice a day and see a dentist every 6 months.
- **Avoid tobacco, vaping, alcohol and drugs** including steroids. Stand up to peer pressure to use tobacco, drugs and alcohol. Illegal 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 alcohol or drugs.
- **Limit your screen time.**

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." Grounding or prohibiting phone calls may be effective forms of discipline.
- **Establish fair rules for use of the car.**
- Teach your teen how to resolve conflicts without violence.
- If a gun is kept in the home, keep the gun and the ammunition locked up in different locations
- **Keep communications open and comfortable.** Attend events in which your teen is participating and give praise for your teen's school and extracurricular achievements. The relationship between you and your teen will be better if you express appreciation for your teen's contribution at home, such as helping with chores. Despite these efforts difficulties between parents and their teen are quite common.
- Continue to play a role in your teen's sex education, perhaps with the aid of books recommended by the physician, followed by talking with your teen.
- 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 teen 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.
- 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.
- At age 16 years, your teen will receive the second dose of the Menactra vaccine and will start the meningitis B vaccine series, which consists of 2 doses given six months apart. He or she may need catch-up doses of the HPV vaccine.
- Yearly Flu and COVID-19 vaccines are recommended.
- Cholesterol screening is recommended at least once between the ages of 17 and 21 years.

If you have any concerns or questions, please call or text the office.