

HEALTH TRACKS

A Newsletter From Local Public Health to Improve the Health of Families in NW Minnesota



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Age-
16-17 YEARS



GREETINGS!

Mid-adolescence is a time of great change physically and psychologically for your son or daughter. Social and school activities will increase, and family harmony and communications may be disrupted. Being the parent of an adolescent is very challenging!

YOUR GROWING TEEN

YOUR TEEN MAY:

- ❖ choose unhealthy habits as a way to express their independence or rebellion, such as cigarette smoking or alcohol or drugs.
TO PREVENT THIS...
 - ◆ Be a good role model
 - ◆ Teach your child how to be assertive to peer pressure
 - ◆ Set firm rules. Let your child know that the use of all drugs is off limits.
- ❖ stay up late at night and sleep in in the morning
- ❖ make poor choices, like dropping out of high school work. Even if teens finish high school, career choices and earnings are limited without a college education.
- ❖ dress in ways that parents find bizarre. This is one of the least harmful ways in which teenagers separate themselves from their parents and assert their identity. In most cases, it's not worth making it an issue. Insist that your child not wear clothes that display offensive messages, are sexually provocative, or are associated with a gang or other undesirable groups.

YOUR HEALTH



Well-Child Check-Ups:

- Your son or daughter should have a physical exam every two years. This may include a sports physical which is required to participate in school sports.
- Regular dental check ups, a balanced diet, fluoride, injury prevention, brushing and flossing are all important for healthy teeth. Many 16 year olds may have braces.

Immunizations (shots):

- At age 16, you should check with your medical provider to see if any immunizations are missing. For more information about this contact your local Public Health Clinic, Physician or School Nurse. Remember he or she will need their Tdap booster every 10 years. The last one should have been at age 12. It is helpful to keep personal records of your immunizations.
- Check to make sure your child has received the HPV vaccine.
- It is also recommended that you and your child receive a yearly flu vaccine!



Physical Changes

Your son will:

- grow to about 90-95% of adult height.
- gain between 15-55 pounds.
- develop an adult voice.

Your daughter will:

- have fairly regular menstrual cycles and pubic hair that is adult in texture and distribution.
- have completed her breast development.
- continue to mature sexually.

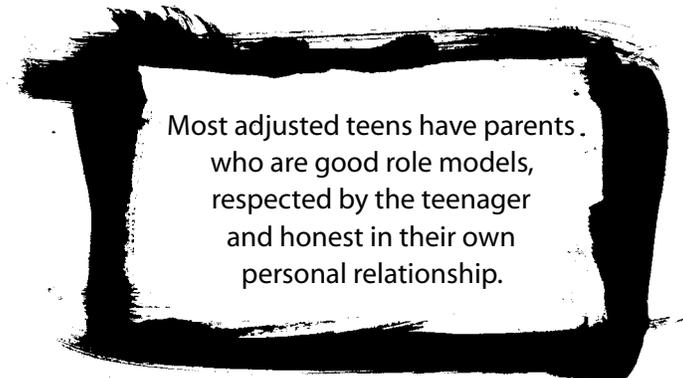
Common Health Concerns

The impact of acne on the life of a teenager may be enormous. They may feel that blemishes affect their popularity and social interactions as well as physical well-being. Be sure your teen keeps her face clean. Wash off make up at night before bed, and check with your pharmacist regarding creams for acne. More severe acne may require a visit to medical provider or Dermatologist.

Depression is the leading cause of suicide. Signs to be aware of include:

- General loss of interest in life.
- Depressed mood.
- Decreased energy, difficulty concentrating.
- Change in sleeping, eating and schoolwork habits.
- Reckless or violent behavior.
- Headaches, stomach aches, physical symptoms that don't have a physical cause.
- Talking about or asking questions about death or suicide.

As a parent it is important to be aware of the signs of suicide and take any talk about suicide seriously.



Most adjusted teens have parents who are good role models, respected by the teenager and honest in their own personal relationship.

Sexuality and Sex Related Concerns

Every year 4 Million cases of Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD's) occur among teenagers in the US. STD's can vary in severity. Syphilis, Chlamydia, and Gonorrhea can be treated with medications. If you don't get treated chlamydia and gonorrhea can damage reproductive organs. This can impact your ability to have a baby in the future. However, some STD's cannot be treated. Herpes and HIV/AIDS are diseases without a cure. Only their symptoms can be treated.

- Parents often find it difficult to talk with their teen about sexuality. It is, however, the parents' responsibility to teach your teen how conception occurs and how to avoid sexually transmitted diseases. It is important for your teen to know your values on sexuality. Look for opportunities to initiate discussions about sexuality. Even if you feel uncomfortable talking about sex, it's better to talk about it than to ignore it. Be sure to tell your teen the positive reasons for delaying sexual activity, and that it is normal to feel sexually attracted to someone and to become sexually excited at times. Teens need to be taught that maturity means learning to accept one's feelings and to make responsible choices that often involve not acting on them.
- By age 16, most teens are dating. If dating doesn't begin too early, or become too excessive, it should be accepted as a normal part of growing up. Helpful guidelines to maintain control over your teen's dating:
 - ◆ know who your teen is dating.
 - ◆ be sure your teen and date are clear about when you expect them home.
 - ◆ ask your child where they plan to go and what they plan to do.
 - ◆ be sure your teen knows the activities and places that are off limits.
 - ◆ set guidelines on how often and when dating is permissible.
 - ◆ If you would like further information on AIDS, teen age pregnancy, STD's, please contact our office.
- **TELL YOUR TEEN:** Sex can't cure loneliness, make someone love you, put you in the "in" crowd, help you hold on to your partner, make you an instant adult, solve your problems.

Nutrition

- ◆ Your teen is growing very rapidly and therefore has increased nutritional needs. Try to serve nutritious, balanced meals for your teen.
- ◆ Poor or irregular eating habits and stress may cause diarrhea, constipation or urinary problems.
- ◆ The teen years are very critical for calcium because a large amount of bone mass is built during adolescence. Calcium rich foods are a better source than calcium supplement. Your teen should have 4 milk servings a day. A serving of milk or milk products is:

- ❖ 8 oz milk
- ❖ 8 oz yogurt
- ❖ 1 1/2 oz cheese
- ❖ 8 oz pudding
- ❖ 8 oz milkshake
- ❖ milk base soups, ice cream and cottage cheese contain about half the amount of calcium per serving. Don't forget other foods found rich in calcium such as broccoli, tofu, salmon and almonds to name a few.



Tell your teen that drinking too many soft drinks may keep your body from using calcium found in foods. This can lead to osteoporosis earlier in life.

- ◆ Try to limit the junk foods that you stock in your house.
- ◆ Many teens feel that they are overweight. Studies have shown that about half of teenage girls are dieting. Many of the diets teens follow can be harmful and can lead to more serious eating disorders:
- ◆ Anorexia nervosa is literally starving by eating foods with very few calories or very small portions. She may spend hours exercising, and can experience fainting, hair loss and disruption of menstrual cycle.
- ◆ Bulimia is consuming massive amounts of food at one time, followed by self-induced vomiting, or using laxatives or other means to counteract the effects of the food binge.

An eating disorder can be a sign of underlying emotional struggle. Please contact your physician.

Encourage physical activity and healthy balanced meals and snacks to maintain healthy weight and BMI.

Positive Parenting

Establishing independence is an important transition for children during the teen years. As parents of teens, you must gradually let go, but continue to make demands and set limits for your child.

- ✓ Allow teens to experience natural consequences of their actions. This requires them to learn from their mistakes and to become responsible for their own behavior
- ✓ Be firm
- ✓ Your tone of voice is crucial.
- ✓ Simply state the consequence for breaking the rule.
- ✓ Let your teen know that you trust their ability to make decisions.

Safety

Automobile crashes and accidental injury is the great cause of death for people ages 16-24. Minnesotans that are least likely to buckle up and more likely to die in crashes are young drivers. Each year, motor vehicle occupant drivers ages 15-29 account for nearly 43 percent of all unbelted deaths and nearly 50 percent of all unbelted serious injuries - yet this group represents only 24 percent of all licensed drivers. Properly wearing a seat belt reduces the risk of fatal injury to front seat passenger occupants by 45 percent in a car and 60 percent in a light truck. Alcohol is a factor in fatal crashes twice as often for high school age drivers. Teach your child to never drink and drive and never ride with someone who has been drinking.

Insist your teen wear a helmet on a motorcycle, bicycle or any other ATV. Using the helmet is the single, most effective counter measure available to reduce head injuries and fatalities resulting from bicycle crashes.

- ✓ You and your teen should use a seatbelt every time you ride in a car.
- ✓ Teach him how to swim.
- ✓ Teach water safety and always wear life jackets.
- ✓ Use sunscreen (SPF 15 at least).
- ✓ Keep household, all chemical products, and medicines safely capped in original containers.
 - Minnesota Poison Control information number 1-800-222-1222.
- ✓ Practice fire drills in your home.
- ✓ Check smoke detectors annually.

I hope you have enjoyed this newsletter. Please feel free to call me if you have any questions. Please call me if you have a change of address or phone number so you can continue to receive these newsletters. Meanwhile, enjoy this special time in your life.



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