

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Height \_\_\_\_\_

Weight \_\_\_\_\_



## Well Child TIPS FOR TAKING CARE OF YOUR 14-YEAR-OLD

CHILDREN ARE CONSTANTLY CHANGING. And while you as parents can't anticipate every change, these Well Child Tips can prepare you for what lies ahead and help you raise a healthy and safe child.

### SAFETY

- Many teens begin to smoke and drink to increase their self-esteem or social status, or because of peer pressure and a lack of understanding of the risks of addiction. Education from you helps your child resist peer pressure and make good decisions. Not discussing the dangers leaves your child to turn but to his peers.
- Teens drink to relax, and to dull feelings of pain or loneliness.
- About one-third of all hearing loss results from loud noises. Your child should avoid listening to loud music without earplugs and refrain from listening to loud music through earphones.
- Teens are very active with media (Internet, video games, television, music). Be sure you know what messages they are seeing and hearing.
- Many adolescents feel the need to get involved in risky behaviors to experience peer admiration, have a feeling of achievement or to express their individuality. This need to experience new and exciting things can lead to use of drugs, alcohol, tobacco and engaging in dangerous stunts without fully realizing the risks. Talk to your teen about the real risks of these behaviors and make them understand that bad things can happen to them when they engage in risky behaviors. Work with your teen to identify safe and appropriate ways to meet these needs such as trying a new sport, participating in outdoor leadership courses; taking a leadership role in school clubs or extracurricular groups; participating in controlled high-risk sports such as rappelling or mountain climbing.

### DEVELOPMENT

- Sleep is as important at this time as ever because your child's body is going through growth and changes. Teens need at least six to eight hours of sleep per night. Lack of sleep causes inability to concentrate and depression as well as physical problems such as decreased ability to fight off infections and slowed reaction time.
- Fifty-one percent of an individual's overall health status is governed by lifestyle choices, and developing healthy habits in childhood can continue to adulthood. Not only does exercise

increase energy and help build stronger heart, lungs and muscles, but it also promotes a more positive attitude and alertness. Teens should exercise three to five times a week for 20 to 30 minutes and be sure to drink plenty of fluids before, during and after exercise.

- If your child has mild acne, as most adolescents do, encourage him to wash with mild soap and water twice a day using a clean washcloth each time. Teens with severe acne should see a doctor for prescriptions to help control it and avoid scarring. To minimize acne, your child should also:
  - keep hair away from the face
  - avoid drying medicines
  - avoid wearing too much makeup
  - use only water-based makeup formulas
- Oily hair can also affect teens. They should wash hair regularly and allow it to air-dry if possible. Brush hair well once a day and massage the scalp with a brush to promote circulation.
- Talk with your teen about body image and the dangers of too much media influence. Eating nutritious, balanced meals and keeping a sensible exercise plan are the only healthy ways to affect your body shape. Drastic measures like starvation diets, over-exercising and steroids are dangerous.
- Your teen may look more to friends for support and help in decision-making.
- Your teen may be very concerned about being liked by friends.
- Privacy is a big concern for this age group. Your teen may be very selective in who he shares his feelings and concerns with.
- Your teen may begin to show interest in future career goals.
- Your teen may be influenced by peer pressure. Some teens view the loss of friendships as worse than punishment from parents.
- Teens may look outside of the home to find other ways to earn money (i.e. baby-sitting or mowing lawn).
- Teens are beginning to develop the skill of thinking

abstractly. It is important to begin encouraging them in this skill by allowing them to work out their own solutions, with you listening to their ideas first before expressing your own.

## PARENTING

- Be understanding and supportive if your teen develops interests different from your own. Always be willing to listen. Reserve judgments and only comment when safety, legal or moral lines are crossed.
- Some of your 14-year-old's friends may begin getting their driver's licenses. Make sure to talk with your child about the importance of safe driving. He should always obey all traffic rules. Let him know if he feels unsafe he should call you for a ride. He should never:
  - put too many people in a car
  - take drugs or drink when driving
  - speed or race
  - dial cellular phones or listen to loud music
- Family meetings are more important now than ever with the hectic schedules of teenagers.
- Provide opportunities to practice making decisions. Help your teen make educated decisions. Take the time to discuss such issues as sex, smoking, alcohol and drugs. Let teens know the possible outcomes of their decision-making.
- Encourage your teen to interact with peers through activities such as clubs or team sports. Recognize that peers are a big part of your teen's life. Take the time to get to know his friends. Talk to your child about the importance of choosing good friends and discuss some characteristics a good friend should have. Self-esteem at this age is dependent on the need to do well outside the family where people won't always give him unconditional love.
- Be sure to take opportunities to check in with your teen. See how he is doing in his daily life. Be an active listener to your children:
  - maintain eye contact
  - stop everything else and just listen
  - give your full attention
  - respect what your child says even if you disagree
  - help your child come to his own solutions
  - look for body language clues in addition to the words your child speaks
  - be honest

- It is a good idea to take opportunities to discuss with your teen what you expect of him. Let him know what the rules are and the consequences for breaking them. Allow him the time to share his feelings about the rules. Encourage his input and suggestions on consequences.
- If you haven't before, discuss the risks of drugs, alcohol and tobacco and re-emphasize it if you've already done so.
- Discipline should be designed with your child's increasing maturity in mind. Include your child's input in making rules and re-evaluate rules regularly as your child continues to mature. Clearly explain limits and consequences. You should have two kinds of rules. Negotiable rules, such as household responsibilities, dress and curfews; and non-negotiable rules, such as safety and values. Explain why non-negotiable rules are fixed. Use your child's failures at following rules as learning opportunities and don't just impose penalties without discussing appropriate alternatives to bad behavior. Never ignore or excuse unacceptable behavior.
- It is the parent's responsibility to provide accurate information and basic values about sexuality. Let your child lead your discussions, but be prepared to initiate them if your child never does. Make sure your answers fit your child's maturity and figure out exactly what he's asking before you answer so that you don't give him more of an answer than he's ready for. Be direct, informed (admit when you don't know something and search for the answer together), model your values, be open and willing to discuss sex and let your child know you are always available. Be prepared for disagreement and know that questioning and exploring your family's values does not mean your teen is rejecting them.
- If your child exhibits aggressive behavior, let him know it is unacceptable. Help him to understand how it feels to be on the receiving end of his aggressive behavior, that it is hurtful. Help your child find alternative ways to resolve conflict rather than aggression; model appropriate behavior. A child should be responsible for restoring damaged property. Reinforce positive behavior.

## NUTRITION

- Teens can benefit from the structure of family meals, even though it may be hard for you to enforce a mealtime schedule. Cooking and eating together is a way for busy family members to connect.
- Teens are more likely to eat meals away from home, and these are usually fast food meals. Fast foods can be included as part of a healthy diet as long as they are not a major part.