

Name _____

Date _____ Height _____

Weight _____



Children'sSM
Healthcare of Atlanta

Well Child TIPS FOR TAKING CARE OF YOUR 12-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

- Make sure your child observes basic safety rules, even when you're not around. He should always wear a seatbelt in the car, wear a helmet when riding a bike and a helmet and pads when skating.
- Make sure that your child knows the dangers of too much sun exposure. While he might like that tan look now, make sure he knows that too much sun can cause wrinkles, brown age spots, leathery skin and possibly skin cancer. Encourage him to wear sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 15 whenever he is outdoors.

DEVELOPMENT

- Adolescents go through major growth physically, emotionally and intellectually. Your child may be nervous, upset or confused by body changes related to puberty. Help him understand his feelings are normal. You can help your child avoid many of these painful feelings by making sure that you have discussed all of these changes before they happen. This way your child knows what to expect and why it is happening. Girls need to know about menstruation before it happens the first time. Make sure to have sanitary supplies on hand and that you have discussed with your daughter how to properly use them.
- Acne is a common problem during puberty. To help prevent the buildup of oil that causes acne, make sure your child washes his face morning and night with soap and warm water. Never scrub or squeeze pimples since that can cause additional irritation. If the acne is severe, visit a dermatologist. There are many medications that can help.
- Your child may show more interest in friendships with both sexes.
- Your child may make unsafe decisions due to peer pressure. Help him develop and maintain personal standards and maintain his self-confidence – all of

which helps him resist peer pressure. Let him know that just because others say or believe something does not make it right. Make sure you know his friends and their parents. Parents can support each other in keeping an eye on the whole group's activities. Choosing friends is one of the most important decisions your child makes.

- Children are now exposed to more explicit images in television, movies, books and magazines. View these with your child and help him to compare them to reality and see the differences. Talk about what is appropriate in "real life."
- Children this age can understand what others think of them and alter their behavior to fit what they think others want.
- Children may try to push their limits more at this age, so accountability is very important. Don't lower your expectations just because your child has become difficult. Try to highlight what your child does right.
- A firm bedtime is still important at this age, probably between 9 and 9:30 p.m. on a school night.



PARENTING

- The most important thing you can do for your adolescent child is keep the lines of communication open. Let your child direct your talk with questions about what interests or confuses him. Don't overload him with too much information. If your child is not coming to you with questions, start the conversation or suggest books to read and discuss. If you do not discuss puberty, sex, alcohol, tobacco and drugs, your child is less able to make good decisions. Now is the time to talk to your child about your values and morals. After age 13, children turn to peers for information that can be wrong or lacking.
 - As your child enters his teens, he has conflict between wanting independence and still needing to be dependent at times. Be aware of his moods and try to give space when he asks for it, but always be available for support when needed. Be aware that your child may not like being told what to do and may rebel, so pick your battles wisely.
 - Provide chances for your child to relate with peers through sports or clubs.
 - When your child is out, you should know where he is, what he is doing and whom he is with.
 - Help your child learn responsibility. Give him chores around the house. Have him complete tasks to earn his allowance or money to go out with friends.
 - Be on the lookout for signs of stress/overload including physical symptoms, depression, disinterest in previously enjoyed activities, poor grades and antisocial behavior. How you can help:
 - talk and listen
 - help establish priorities
 - help clarify problems
 - help your child discover solutions
 - identify any stress you might be imposing
- constant dieting
 - skipping meals
 - omitting or eating only from specific food groups
 - withdrawal from family, friends and school
 - obsession with food
 - compulsive exercise
 - use of laxatives or vomiting
 - use of special products to “bulk up” or lose weight
- Skipping meals only makes it more difficult to regulate weight. If your child is concerned about his weight, have him see a doctor or nutritionist for advice. He should maintain healthy exercise with a reasonable, balanced diet.
 - Avoidance of specific food groups, such as refusal to eat any fat, may be a sign of disordered eating. Avoidance of all carbohydrate foods is typical of kids attempting to drop weight quickly for coaches who enforce strict weight requirements, such as in wrestling and gymnastics; this is a dangerous practice.
 - Protein powder and megavitamin supplements are unnecessary, expensive and may place stress on the body as it works to digest these highly concentrated products. Weight loss supplements are often useless, dangerous and expensive.
 - Continue to serve your child regular meals and snacks from all food groups. Ask that he sit with you at meals even if he chooses not to eat at that time. Talk to him about his appearance concerns and always reassure him that he is wonderful, just the way he is. Be very aware of how your eating attitudes and behaviors have a strong influence on your child.
 - Your child is now responsible for his own grooming and proper care of his teeth. He should be brushing at least three minutes morning and night and after meals, flossing every day, and visiting a dentist every six months. Diet plays a central role in healthy teeth, so make sure your child doesn't indulge in between-meal sweets.

NUTRITION

- Middle school girls and boys are quite focused on the way they look. They tend to be very self-critical and unhappy with their body size and shape. They often want to make drastic changes in their eating to try to change their bodies, which can result in serious eating disorders. Be alert for changes in eating behavior such as