

Woburn & North Andover Pediatric Associates

7 Alfred Street, Baldwin Park II, Woburn, MA 01801 - Phone 781-933-6236, Fax 781-938-8050
800 Turnpike Street, North Andover, MA 01845 - Phone 978-557-5712, Fax 978-557-5406



Routine Physical Exam: 15 – 17 years

Development

- Your teen continues to rapidly develop in many directions simultaneously – physically, cognitively, emotionally, and socially. School and its associated activities become the central focus of life for many middle adolescents.
- He/she should:
 - Become more skillful, develop improved speech, accuracy, and dexterity
 - Form caring, supportive relationships with family, other adults, and peers
 - Demonstrate resiliency when confronted with life stressors
 - Demonstrate increasingly responsible and independent decision making
 - Have hobbies, be active in sports, arts, clubs, or church groups
- Puberty is a sequence of stages of maturation affecting nearly every body system.
 - All: enlargement of genitals, body odor, growth spurts, appearance of pubic and underarm hair, and increased muscular strength and endurance
 - Girls: development of breasts, increased fatty tissue in buttocks, thighs, breasts, menstruation (at any point from 9-16 years)
 - Boys: voice changes, facial hair
- The ability to solve problems, make good decisions, and cope with stress are extremely important skills for your teen to develop. Help your child set priorities, manage stress, and make progress toward goals. He/she should assume more responsibilities such as obtaining a job, driving, and planning career goals.
- Parents who are **accepting, caring, firm, and democratic** have adolescents who are less depressed, enter into risk taking behaviors at a later age, and better succeed academically. Set clear expectations and consequences for unacceptable behaviors.
- Your teen needs 8-10 hours of sleep every night. Teens are very aware of changes in their bodies – they often have increased headaches & fatigue because they need more sleep. Fatigue is often due to overscheduling of activities. Try to keep sleep schedules the same during the week and on weekends. Keep phones and internet capable devices out of the bedroom.
- Young people are more likely to make healthy choices if they stay connected with family members and friends.
- Have a discussion with your teen about risk taking behaviors and peer influenced activities such as “dares”, “showing off”, alcohol/substance use, and sexual activity.
- Encourage your teen to discuss safe sex and birth control with you, and with the provider at his/her physical exam.
- Adolescents have concerns regarding their body image, establishing their identity, and conflicts between their need for independence from authority figures versus a need to be dependent and nurtured. This often leads to mood swings and conflicts within the family. Try to be accepting, caring, democratic, and firm.
- Visit: www.HealthyChildren.org, search topics like “Physical Changes During Puberty”;
www.YoungWomensHealth.org; www.YoungMensHealthSite.org

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Safety

- Teach your teen about driver safety and responsibilities. Everyone needs to wear a seatbelt and follow traffic regulations. NO texting and driving!
- Limit screen time (TV, videogames, computer, iPad, etc.) to less than 2 hour per day.
- Monitor computer games, mobile device use, TV, and internet use for use and content. Do not allow TV or internet devices in the bedroom.
- Reinforce avoidance of alcohol, tobacco, drugs, diet pills, steroids, and inhalants. Discourage tattooing, body piercing, and tanning beds. Consider locking your liquor cabinet & prescription medications (especially controlled substances).
- Discuss safe sex and birth control options. Encourage abstinence as the safest way to prevent pregnancy and avoid sexually transmitted diseases (STD's) including HIV.
- Sports injuries are common. Always wear protective equipment for activities (bikes, scooters): appropriate sized helmet, wrist/elbow/knee pads, mouth guards. Encourage supervised sports activities.
- Ensure smoke and carbon monoxide detectors are working appropriately. Make and practice (1-2 time per year) a plan for escape in case of fire.
- Gun safety can be a tough topic to address but it is important. If it is necessary to keep a gun in your home, be sure it is stored unloaded and securely locked. Ammunition should be stored separately and also locked. Discuss firearm safety with your child.
- Visit: www.HealthyChildren.org, search topics like “ ”; www.MassRMV.com, search “Junior Operator License”; www.CDC.gov, search “Motor Vehicle Safety for Teen Drivers”

Nutrition

- Protein, mineral (including calcium), total calorie, and vitamin needs are reaching adult values. Iron needs are increased further with menstruation. Encourage high iron foods like meats, legumes, and leafy greens. Ensure sufficient calcium intake through low fat or fat free dairy, dark green leafy veggies, beans, and fish.
- Help your child learn to choose appropriate foods, including plenty of fruits and vegetables. Limit high fat or low nutrient foods & beverages.
- Share family meal time to make meal time pleasant, encourage conversation, and avoid distractions at the dinner table (no TV or mobile devices).
- This is often a time when there is rebellion against previous family eating habits. Your teen may choose snacks, fast foods, or alternative diets (vegetarian, vegan, etc.) as a major source of nutrition.
- Dietary supplements to gain or lose weight are not recommended.
- Try to get at least 1 hour of exercise every day.
- Visit: www.ChooseMyPlate.gov; www.HealthyChildren.org, search “Nutrition and Supplement Use”

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Family/Social and Behavior

- Peer groups become increasingly important to providing a sense of acceptance, support, belonging. Beware of how your teens friends are influencing him/her, as there can be negative aspects too. Watch for: changes in mood, drop in school performance, change in peer group. If you have concerns about depression, substance use, eating disorders, or school problems, please talk to your child's pediatrician.
- Get to know your teen's friends and families by encouraging your teen to invite his/her friends into your home. Monitor and be aware of who your teen is spending time with.
- Discuss your expectations regarding curfews, parties, dating, drinking, smoking, etc. Discuss risk taking dangers and peer influenced activities (dares, "showing off", sexual activity, substance use). Be clear and firm about the consequences for unacceptable behaviors.
- At this age, we encourage teens to take charge of their own health. We care for patients until they turn 21 years, so it is important for older adolescents to start communicating directly with our staff and clinicians. Please see our adolescent privacy policy for more information.