

CERTIFIED WOMEN'S HEALTH COUNSELOR ONLINE COURSE: SESSION 11

- Teen Health

Meeting the Nutritional Needs of Teenagers

As adolescents make the transition from being a child to being a teenager, their bodies will undergo some major changes. Because of that, they need to take in the proper amount of calories and nutrients to fuel their bodies during those changes. Although some teens would prefer to subsist on junk food, it's important that they eat a balanced diet because it will help them develop properly.



Calories and Vitamins

Because teenagers go through as many physical changes, they need to take in a large amount of calories. While it may seem like they're eating you out of house and home, that surge in appetite actually represents an increased need for energy, which fuels the body during its transition period. In fact, the body's caloric requirement is at its highest during the teenage years. On average, boys should consume 2,800 to 3,000 calories a day and girls should consume 2,200 to 2,400 calories a day. Because girls take in a lesser amount of calories than boys, they are more likely to develop vitamin deficiencies.

The vitamins that teens tend to be most deficient in are calcium, iron and zinc, which are all essential for growth.

- **Calcium:** Calcium plays a vital role in bone development and is needed to keep bones strong and healthy. Bones will continue to grow until the age of 30 so it's important that teens fulfill their calcium requirement, which is 800 to 1,000 milligrams per day. Some of the best sources of calcium are dairy products and leafy greens.
- **Iron:** Iron plays an important role in the development of hemoglobin and provides the body with energy. Girls tend to be deficient in this vitamin because their menstrual cycle will deplete their bodies of iron. A few good sources of iron are red meat, leafy greens, lentils and soybeans.
- **Zinc:** Zinc is an immune system booster and helps the body fight off infections. It also plays a role in genetic regulation, and stabilizes the metabolism. Some good sources of zinc include beef, legumes, mushrooms and spinach.

It's important that teenagers get these vitamins through food sources as opposed to supplements. The fruits, vegetables and grains that contain these vitamins also contain phytochemicals, which protect the body from disease.

Protein, Carbs and Fat

One nutrient that teenagers tend to not be deficient in is protein. Teens usually take in more than twice the recommended amount of protein, which can be found in beef, poultry and eggs – foods that most teenagers don't mind eating. Teens that follow a vegetarian or vegan diet may struggle to meet their protein needs, but can get protein from nuts, seeds and tofu. Other nutrients that are essential to a teen's diet include:

- **Carbohydrates:** Teens also tend to not have a problem taking in carbohydrates, but it is important that they eat foods that contain complex carbohydrates, not simple carbohydrates. Complex carbs provide long-lasting energy and are low in fat, whereas simple carbs provide short bursts of energy and tend to be found in fatty foods. It's recommended that 50 to 60 percent of teens' caloric intake consists of complex carbs. Good sources of complex carbs include whole grains, corn, potatoes and legumes.
- **Fat:** Fat should make up no more than 30 percent of a teen's diet. Teens should avoid saturated fats and, instead, go for sources of monounsaturated fats, which are heart healthy, like olive oil and peanut butter.

Nutrition Tips

Nutrition aside, it's also important for teens to learn good eating habits while they're young. If they learn to eat right and why they should eat right at an early age, they'll be able to make better nutritional decisions for themselves in the future. Here are some things that you can do to ensure that your teen gets in the habit of eating right:



- **Make sure your teen always eats a healthy breakfast.** It will keep them full until lunchtime and will allow them to concentrate and perform better in the classroom.
- **Provide healthy snack options.** Instead of stocking the pantry with cookies, potato chips and snack cakes, make sure your teen has healthy options like trail mix, mixed nuts, fruits and vegetables, cheese and yogurt.
- **Limit sugar intake.** Teens love sodas, but they're chock full of sugar, which can cause weight gain and even heart disease later on in life. Make sure your teen drinks water, teas and fresh fruit juices, and consumes sugary drinks and snacks in moderation.
- **Don't force your teen to eat until his or her plate is clean.** That's a habit that can lead to overeating and weight gain in the future. Let your teen know it's OK to eat until he or she feels full, rather than consuming everything in sight.
- **Don't use food as a reward or as a way to comfort your teen.** This is another habit that can lead to overeating and weight gain later in life.
- **Teach your teen how to read nutrition labels.** Point out the hidden sugars and calories in foods that may be labeled as "low-fat" or "fat-free."
- **Get your teen involved in cooking.** Let your teen help you chop vegetables or prepare dessert. You can even allow your teen to prepare a whole entire meal. Instructing your teen to cook healthy, nutritional meals can help later on in life.

While meeting the nutritional needs of teenagers is important for overall health, it's just as important for teens to get involved in some sort of physical activity during the day. Even if they eat healthily, a sedentary lifestyle can also come with consequences. By pairing exercise with good eating habits now, your teen will remain healthy long into adulthood.

What Girls Need to Know About Growing Up - Making Your Body Work for You

“Am I normal?” That’s a question many girls ask during puberty. Chances are your body development is quite normal. But there’s so much going on at once, just knowing what’s coming can help put your mind at ease. Here’s what to expect during puberty -- and why.



Intro to Puberty

Puberty usually starts between the ages of 8 and 13 and lasts a few years. It may start earlier in girls who are overweight, or later in girls who are very athletic or thin. If you are 12 and haven't started developing breasts or are 15 and haven't gotten your period, your doctor will probably want to examine you to make sure everything's OK.

During puberty, your body releases hormones that stimulate your ovaries to start producing the female hormone estrogen. Gradually, a girl's body starts changing into a woman's body. But these surging hormones can also make your mood go up and down -- and sometimes it may seem as if your body is out of control.

Growing and Gaining Weight

Most girls experience growth spurts early in puberty, while most boys have them later in puberty. That’s why many girls are taller than boys in middle school.

Increased body fat is also a normal part of puberty. “You may go from 8% to 21% body fat,” says Kathy McCoy, MD, a psychiatrist who co-wrote *The Teenage Body Book* and who was a columnist for *Seventeen* magazine.

Don’t go on a diet to try to lose this weight. “It’s not bad fat,” says Melisa Holmes, MD, who co-wrote the *Girlology* book series. “Women just have to have a certain amount of body fat for reproduction and the health of our menstrual cycles.”

Breast Development

Along with gaining curvier hips, your breasts grow during puberty. Inside them, a network of milk ducts develops. This is your body's way of preparing you to nurse a baby when you're older.

Breast development is one of the changes that stress girls out the most. Many girls worry that their breasts aren’t growing enough. But breasts usually continue to grow until you’re 17 or 18 years old -- or even into your 20s. Sometimes one breast grows faster than the other, although the slower one usually catches up.

Your nipples also change during puberty. They can become pink or dark brown, turned inward or out. Sometimes hairs grow around them. All of this is normal.

If you want to get an idea about what your breasts might look like as a woman, look at your mom. Your final breast size is based partly on heredity. "Your breasts aren't necessarily going to be the same as your mom's because you've got your dad's genes added in, but you can look back at your ancestors and get a pretty good feel for it," Holmes says.

Menstruation

Two years or so after your breasts start to develop you'll probably get your first period. Periods usually last between two and eight days and come every 21 to 35 days. A 28-day cycle is common, but often it takes a while before your periods are regular.

Each month, the lining of your uterus thickens with blood to help a fertilized egg grow. When you don't become pregnant, that lining sheds, and blood comes out of your vagina. Only a couple of tablespoons of blood are released during your period, but it can seem like a lot more.

Vaginal Discharge

You may notice white, sticky stuff in your underpants. That's the fluid that keeps your vagina moist and clean. Vaginal discharge may become thicker and stickier at some points during your menstrual cycle. It has a slight odor but most people can't smell it. Bathing regularly with soap can help reduce the odor if it bothers you.

If your vaginal discharge becomes itchy or irritated, has a strong odor, or is dark yellow or greenish, you may have a vaginal infection. See your doctor.

Body Hair

Puberty brings hair to your body in new places: under your arms, in your genital area, and maybe even on your upper lip. The hair on your arms and legs may also get darker or thicker. Pubic hair usually starts with a few straight strands and becomes curlier and darker as it grows. Eventually it grows into a thick triangle over the pubic bone and spreads a little to your inner thighs. This growth may start at the beginning of puberty or any time during it.

If you grow hair on your chest or chin, though, see your doctor. You may have a hormone imbalance that needs to be corrected.

Sweating Through Puberty

Your body starts sweating more during puberty. When sweat combines with bacteria -- under your arms, for instance -- it causes body odor. To control odor, bathe or shower every day with a deodorant soap and use an antiperspirant. "The higher the aluminum chloride content, the more antiperspirant activity it will have," says obstetrician-gynecologist Holmes. (If you develop a rash under your arms, you may be allergic to aluminum and should use an antiperspirant that doesn't contain it.) Also, clothes made of fabrics that wick moisture will dry faster and don't show armpit stains as much.

Your feet may get sweaty too. Wear cotton socks to absorb moisture, and rotate your shoes, so they have time to dry out. Avoid shoes made of plastic, rubber, or other manmade materials. If you have sweaty palms, skip hand lotion. Use a hand sanitizer to keep your hands drier.

Acne

Acne -- whiteheads, blackheads, and pimples -- is caused by surging hormones. If you have it, try cleansing with a gentle non-soap cleanser and use over-the-counter acne products with benzoyl peroxide or salicylic acid. It also helps to use sunscreens, moisturizers, and makeup that are labeled “oil free” or “non-comedogenic.” If these things don’t get your acne under control, a dermatologist can use other treatments that will help.

Making Your Body Work for You

At some point during puberty, you will probably look at your face, hair, or body in the mirror and not like what you see. At those times, Holmes says, it can help to appreciate the great things your body can do -- like playing the piano, doing a back flip, or climbing a mountain. If you hate your body most of the time, talk to a school nurse or counselor who can help you learn to see your body differently.

Puberty Changes in Boys: What to Expect

For most boys, puberty is an exciting yet confusing time. Their bodies change as their hormones race, creating new feelings and anxiety. Usually beginning between the ages of 9 and 14, puberty in boys leads to a number of changes in appearance, sexual development and emotions.

Changes in Appearance

When boys begin puberty, their bodies start to go through a number of physical changes that affect their appearance. Several areas of the body begin to change, including:

- **Muscles:** Boys start developing more muscle during puberty.
- **Shoulders:** Boys’ shoulders become broader during puberty as well.
- **Height:** Boys grow in height quickly during puberty, often in response to growth spurts. Girls often start growing earlier, so it’s not uncommon for boys to be shorter than girls for a while before hitting their growth spurt.
- **Acne:** Many boys develop acne during puberty. Fortunately, there are lots of over-the-counter products which are available for the treatment of acne.
- **Breasts:** Some boys experience slight breast development during puberty, known as gynecomastia. This is usually temporary and disappears. If it doesn’t go away, see a doctor to rule out possible health complications.

Sexual Development

In addition to obvious physical changes, boys also experience extensive sexual development during puberty. Boys who are going through puberty will notice that their penis will grow in length and girth. Meanwhile, their testicles will also increase in size. It’s not uncommon for one testicle to grow faster or to hang lower than the other.

Boys will also begin to have erections more often during puberty. This is when the penis hardens and lengthens, and it usually occurs in response to sexual thoughts or physical stimulation. However, boys going through puberty sometimes get erections with no stimulation at all, including when they are asleep. This may result in a wet dream, which occurs when a boy ejaculates during sleep. Wet dreams are common among boys going through puberty. Many boys also begin to masturbate more often during puberty as a way to process their increased sex drive in a safe and controlled manner. It's important for boys at this age to understand that if they do act on their sexual impulses, they can potentially father a child.

Hair Growth

During puberty, boys begin growing more hair on their body in a variety of areas. Hair begins to grow on the face above the lips, on the cheeks and on the chin. Eventually, boys may need to start shaving once the hair starts getting dense and thick enough. Boys will also discover that hair grows in the armpits (underarm hair) and around the genitals (pubic hair) during puberty. Pubic hair tends to become coarser and thicker over time.

Boys may also notice that they sweat more once they've started puberty. This results in an increase in their body odor as well, so most boys begin wearing deodorant around this time.

Voice Changes

Another part of puberty is for a boy's voice to deepen. This doesn't happen overnight. Instead, it usually happens slowly over a period of time. This might cause the voice to "break" or "crack" while a boy is talking. This simply means that the voice goes up or down in pitch as he talks. However, this is only temporary and eventually his voice will deepen permanently.

Emotional Changes

One of the most difficult parts of puberty for many boys is the emotional changes that they go through. These changes often occur as a response to the increase in hormones in a boy's body and how his body is processing those changes. One common effect is that boys often go through mood swings during puberty. They may be feeling happy and jovial one moment and then very angry the next. Boys are much more prone to becoming upset or angry as a result of their increased emotional sensitivity during this time. Some boys also act more impulsively during puberty.

Feelings of **anxiety** or confusion are also common among boys who are going through puberty. This anxiety may have to do with the fact that they feel uncomfortable about their changing appearance. Others may feel anxious about the fact that they are starting puberty before or after most of their peers. Boys should be informed that puberty can start at very different ages and progress at different rates. However, if a boy has not started puberty by age 15, he should see a doctor to rule out possible health complications.

In addition, boys will also experience an increase in their sex drive once they hit puberty. This results in a number of responses, from developing romantic feelings for someone to having sexual thoughts or impulses.

Bottom Line

Boys go through a lot of confusing and startling changes during puberty. Though it's a natural part of growing up, it helps if boys have someone they can talk to about their new feelings and appearance. Check your local health clinics or ask your doctor if you want to learn more about puberty in boys or find support resources for a boy going through these changes.

10 Best Ways to Prevent Acne

Acne is a fact of life for a lot of people, and not just teenagers. And while **acne breakouts** can be bothersome, there are things that people can do to help keep them to a minimum. These are 10 of the best ways that people can keep their acne at bay.

Keep It Clean

While acne is a problem that starts below the skin's surface, keeping acne-prone skin clean is essential. The reason is that the oils on the skin's surface can clog pores and cause pimples to develop in those with skin already prone to breakouts. For this same reason, exfoliation is important as well. Exfoliation removes the dead skin on the surface. However it's important to remember that acne is caused by inflammation in the skin, so it's important to be gentle. Rough cleansing can make the inflammation, and the acne, worse.

Acne Friendly Cosmetics

Acne prone skin is typically sensitive skin as well, making it easily irritated by some cosmetics. So when shopping for cosmetics, look for the word "**non-comedogenic**" on the label. This means that it is designed not to clog pores. Opt for oil-free products such as moisturizers and **sunscreens** as well, because they will also help keep skin clear.

Clean Your Cellphone

While most people never really think about it, a cellphone can really aggravate acne. When using the phone, it's pressed against the side of the face, and can collect all the oils and bacteria that are on the skin. In addition, most phones get warm when used which can encourage pores to open and allow oil and bacteria to reach deeper into the skin. Over time, this can cause acne breakouts if the phone isn't cleaned. There are special wipes available designed to clean electronic devices like cellphones safely.

Keep Hair Products off Your Face

While the products that people put on their hair are designed to help their style last all day, it can wreak havoc on acne prone skin. The chemicals in these products can irritate skin across the forehead, jaw, neck and back causing breakouts. Also, if breakouts seem to occur most often on the forehead, it is a good idea to lose the bangs.

Don't Smoke

In addition to being extremely bad for the human body, smoking can also damage skin. The absolutely shocking chemicals found in cigarettes and other tobacco products can cause irritation to the skin as well as causing drying, which will lead to deep wrinkling later in life. So it's best to skip the cigarettes, or quit if someone has already started.

Don't Go To Bed with Makeup On

While oil-free, non-comedogenic products are fine for use during the day, at night is when the body rejuvenates itself, and that includes the skin. So wearing makeup to bed can cause the skin to become irritated and keep the dirt and oils from the day on the skin where it can clog pores. There are a variety of products on the market that make it quick and easy to remove makeup, so no more excuses. Remove the makeup before calling it a night.

Keep Stress at Bay

Stress increases the body's inflammatory response, and since acne itself is an inflammatory response, stress has been shown to make acne worse. How many times have we all heard about brides waking on their wedding day stressed out with a bunch of zits? So if a stressful even is on the horizon, try adding some salicylic acid or benzyl peroxide cleanser and **an** oil-free moisturizer to the daily routine. This can help stop the break out before it starts.

Don't Wear a Hat

Hats can be fashionable and functional, but for those with acne prone skin, they are a no-no. Hats can hold hair products, sweat, skin oils and **cosmetic products** against the forehead, leading to breakouts along the forehead. So if breakouts on the forehead are a problem, ditching the hat can help calm skin along the forehead and keep the breakouts to a minimum.

Eat Right

While it is a myth that pizza and soda pop will cause breakouts, the foods and drinks that people put into their body can make a difference in the condition of their skin. Certain foods can increase the body's inflammatory response, causing an increase in breakouts, if skin was already irritated. Research has also linked the hormones found in dairy products with a possible increase in breakouts, but this doesn't mean that people should skip the dairy, just be sure to reduce inflammation in other ways.

Sleep On Your Back

Its bad news for tummy sleepers, but sleeping on one's back can help prevent acne breakouts. The reason is that the oils from the face and hair rub against the pillow, putting tummy sleeper's faces in constant contact with these oils on their pillowcases and sheets. So back sleeping can cut down on acne breakouts by cutting down on this irritating contact. It's also important to change bed linens often because this too can irritate acne prone skin. Acne is certainly bothersome, but by following these 10 steps can help keep acne breakouts to a minimum, allowing the world to see clear, beautiful skin, instead of red, blotchy acne.

The Major Health Hazards of Fast Food

Because fast food is so convenient and cheap, it's hard to resist at times. Many people also crave the taste of their favorite fast food burgers or fries, which makes it even harder to pass up. Unfortunately, fast food can be one of the unhealthiest options out there when it comes to your diet. It's important to understand the impact that eating fast food can have on your health, especially because it has been linked to serious conditions like diabetes and heart disease. Read this article to learn more about the health risks of the fast food you're eating and how to make healthier choices at the drive-thru.

Nutritional Content of Fast Food

Many people underestimate how bad a fast food meal can be for their health. With so many components of typical fast food fare being fried or greasy, it doesn't take long for the calories and fat to add up. Most fast food items are very high in sodium and cholesterol as well. On top of that, these meals contain very little fiber, vitamins and other nutrients the body needs to properly function.



Take the Burger King Double Whopper with Cheese for example. This one sandwich contains 1,020 calories and 65 grams of fat, says the Rhode Island Cancer Council. That's over 50 percent of the recommended caloric intake for one day, and 100 percent of the recommended fat intake. Meals like this can be extremely detrimental to a person's health, particularly if they are consumed on a regular basis.

What's worse is that this nutritional content information is not readily available to consumers. While some fast food restaurants offer nutrition-related information on their websites, very few actually have this information on-hand at their restaurants or on their menus. For this reason, consumers need to be well aware of the health hazards involved with eating fast food.

Risk for Illness and Disease

Eating fast food has been linked to the following health conditions:

- **Type 2 Diabetes:** According to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), fast food consumption is strongly associated with insulin resistance. This greatly increases an individual's risk of developing Type 2 Diabetes.
- **Obesity:** The NIH also explains that fast food consumption may lead to obesity. One study found that a person who eats fast food at least two times a week will gain at least 10 pounds of extra weight.
- **Cardiovascular Disease:** Having an unhealthy diet is a leading contributor to cardiovascular disease. This condition is caused by the build-up of plaque in the arteries and may lead to heart failure.
- **Stroke:** A poor diet like one obtained from fast food often leads to high blood pressure. In turn, high blood pressure is the leading risk factor for stroke.
- **Cancer:** According to Corporate Accountability International, one-third of cancers are related to poor diet. This is often paired with the fact that obesity is closely linked with cancers of the colon, kidney and esophagus.

Risk for Growth and Development

Health risks associated with fast food aren't just for adults. Children who regularly consume fast food often suffer even more than adults because their conditions only worsen with age. Like adults, children have an increased risk for obesity and Type 2 Diabetes when eating fast food says the NIH. Some studies have also shown that children who eat fast food regularly also have a higher risk for developing asthma, hypertension and high cholesterol.

These factors, combined with the lack of complete nutrition offered by fast food, may lead to improper growth and development in children and teens. In fact, diet is one of the main factors that contribute to proper growth and development. This is especially important for toddlers and young children who are developing and growing at a very fast rate. In these early stages, lack of complete nutrition may stunt brain development, physical growth or motor skill development.

Tips To Avoid the Health Hazards of Fast Food

Eating fast food once in a while shouldn't be too detrimental to your health as long as you don't make it a habit. You can further restrict the health risks of eating fast food by making smarter choices when you eat at these establishments. The following are a few tips to cut down on your calorie, fat and sodium intake while eating fast food:

- Don't be fooled by seemingly harmless salads listed on fast food menus, these can also be health hazards. In many cases, salads are almost as bad for you as burgers, fries and other more obviously unhealthy options thanks to the inclusion of fatty dressings and ingredients like fried chicken or bacon. If you do get a salad, get one without any fried ingredients and choose a light dressing.
- Avoid increasing your portion size. This is a common offering at many fast food restaurants where bigger items are priced only slightly higher in order to encourage patrons to purchase more. Generally, even the smallest size available is a more than enough on its own. A good example is soda, which at 16-to-20 ounces for a small, is already enough for two servings.
- Look up nutritional information online before visiting a fast food restaurant. Simply seeing that a large order of fries has three times the calories of a small order may encourage you to order differently.
- Choose grilled chicken over crispy chicken, skip the mayo, choose apple slices over fries or go for a wrap instead of a sandwich. Smart choices like this can really add up.

Recognizing Signs of Teenage Depression

Teenage depression is a serious issue that many teens, parents and families may face. It can increase the risk of serious health issues for teenagers like stress, anxiety, insomnia and even lead to teenagers putting themselves or others in danger. For parents, teachers, guardians and caregivers, it is important to understand what teenage depression is, then recognize the signs of teenage depression as soon as possible.



What is Teenage Depression?

While many understand that teenagers have a lot to deal with, and going through tough emotional times is a part of growing up, there are many parents and caregivers who do not fully understand what teenage depression really is. The major difference between teenage depression and emotional mood swings is a deep sense of anguish, sadness, despair and even anger. The easiest way you can tell if a teenager is suffering from teenage depression is to be mindful of the common symptoms and signs.

Symptoms of Teenage Depression

It may be fairly difficult for parents and caregivers to determine whether a teenager is suffering from depression, or going through common, teenage mood swings. Here are the common symptoms of teenage depression:

- Lack of joy or enthusiasm
- Highly irritable
- Low self-esteem
- Constantly Agitated
- Apathetic
- Difficulty concentrating
- No motivation to do anything
- Constantly feeling ill or tired



These aren't necessarily all of the symptoms of teen depression, but they are the most common. Since many teenagers face difficult issues everyday of their lives, it's difficult to differentiate whether a teen is suffering from a bad day, or teenage depression. The easiest way to tell the difference is if you notice your teen is showing any of these signs or symptoms on a regular basis with no specific cause or explanation for their behavior.

Signs of Teenage Depression

Some of the possible effects of teenage depression include:

- Poor performance in school
- Drug and alcohol abuse
- Sexual promiscuity
- Violence and aggression
- Self-injury (typically mutilation of the arms)
- Isolation from friends and family
- Eating disorders like anorexia or bulimia



Causes of Teenage Depression

Teenage depression might be isolated to one particular cause or event, or can be a combination of multiple issues a teen might be dealing with:



- The natural stresses of aging and maturing
- Parental issues
- Dealing with the death of a close friend or family member
- Relationship issues including rejection, or breaking up with a boyfriend or girlfriend
- Weight issues
- Failure at school or extra-curricular activities

According to the National Institutes of Health, adolescent girls are twice as likely to experience depression when compared to boys. A history of depression in a teenager's family also increases the risk of teenage depression.

Dealing with Teenage Depression

It's important to recognize the signs and symptoms of teenage depression in its early stages. If your teen is dealing with any of the issues mentioned above, do not simply pass them off as common teenage angst, stress and moodiness. Try communicating with your teen to see if you can identify any issues and remember to be supportive. Dealing with the issue as a family tends to lead to positive effects when addressing teenage depression. Here are some tips on talking with your teen about possible depression issues:

- Handle the issue as delicately as possible. If they don't open up, be persistent, but be careful not to show signs of anger or frustration as it may only make things worse.
- Try not to lecture your teen or sound authoritative.
- Be attentive, and listen to your teen for once. This is the time to allow your teen to open up to you about their problems, something that's difficult for any teen to do.
- While it may be difficult for some parents to relate to the issues their teen is facing, make sure you acknowledge their pain and suffering and be as supportive as possible.

When to Seek Professional Help

Although they might be opposed to it at first, it is important to recognize when your family and your teen need professional help.

- Start by visiting the family doctor to seek assistance and a diagnosis if your teen is suffering from depression.
- Your family doctor might refer to you to a psychiatrist or psychologist who specializes with teen depression.
- Screen multiple specialists and make sure you get your teen's input about who they feel comfortable with. Don't try to force anyone on them.
- While there are various medications available, you may want to strongly consider alternative methods of treatment before resorting to prescribed antidepressants. Certain side effects accompany depression medication, and only a certain number are approved for use on teens ranging from 12 to 17 years of age.

Understanding Teenage Eating Disorders

Eating disorders are a serious problem among teens in the United States. According to KidsHealth.org, about 1 or 2 out of every 100 students suffers from an eating disorder. That number is significantly higher if only females are taken into account – the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP) reports that as many as 10 out of every 100 young women suffers from an eating disorder.



Additionally, individuals who are in their teens or early 20s are more likely to develop an eating disorder than those in any other age group, says The Mayo Clinic. It's important for parents to recognize the signs and symptoms of these disorders in order to prevent serious health problems for their child.

What Is An Eating Disorder?

Eating disorders are health conditions that occur when individuals become preoccupied with their weight and the foods they eat. The preoccupation becomes so intense that people may spend almost all of their time thinking about food and weight, leading them to make destructive decisions when it comes to their diet.



Eating disorders typically lead to the development of an unhealthy weight, which may eventually become life-threatening. In addition, these disorders can be especially dangerous for teens since they are not receiving proper

nutrition during important developmental stages. The health complications of eating disorders in teens can involve:

- Depression
- Delayed growth
- Bone loss
- Digestive problems
- Kidney damage
- Tooth decay
- Heart disease
- Type 2 diabetes
- Anemia
- Gallbladder disease
- High blood pressure

The most common eating disorders are anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa. Anorexia involves a person eating very little food through an extreme diet or fasting. Individuals with this eating disorder often exercise excessively as well. Bulimia, on the other hand, involves a process called bingeing and purging. This occurs when someone eats to excess then tries to compensate for it through forced vomiting.



Another eating disorder which is less common but just as dangerous is binge eating disorder. This condition involves regularly bingeing on food. However, the person does not try to compensate through vomiting or excessive exercise as with bulimia.

Risk Factors

There are several risk factors which increase a teen's chances of developing an eating disorder. Parents with children who fall into one or more of these high-risk categories should be especially vigilant about whether their teens have an eating disorder:

- Being female
- Involvement in certain athletic or artistic activities (dancers, models, gymnasts, runners and wrestlers are among those who are more likely to develop these disorders)
- Family history of eating disorders
- Family problems
- Dieting

- Emotional disorders such as depression, anxiety or obsessive-compulsive disorder
- Difficult transitions, such as entering college, starting a new job or breaking up with a boyfriend or girlfriend

Recognizing an Eating Disorder

One of the best ways that parents can recognize whether their teen has an eating disorder is to know the signs and symptoms of the various eating disorders. Below, the main symptoms of each type of eating disorder are listed.

- **Anorexia:** Thin appearance, preoccupation with food, excessive exercise, refusing to eat, denying hunger, frequently feeling cold, lack of emotion, dizziness, soft hair on the body, dry skin, constipation, abdominal pain, menstrual irregularities, low blood pressure, dehydration, irregular heart rhythms.
- **Bulimia:** Overeating to the point of discomfort, eating sweet or fatty foods excessively, self-induced vomiting, use of laxatives, excessive exercising, visiting the bathroom after or during meals, preoccupation with weight, abnormal bowel problems, damaged teeth and gums, sores in the throat and mouth, swollen salivary glands in the cheeks, sores or calluses on the knuckles or hands, dehydration, menstrual irregularities, drug or alcohol use.
- **Binge eating disorder:** Eating to the point of discomfort, eating quickly, eating alone or in secret, feelings of depression or disgust.

Other common symptoms which may be present with any of the above eating disorders include:

- Withdrawing from social activities
- Negative or distorted body image
- Not wanting to eat in public
- Frequently looking in the mirror
- Wearing baggy or layered clothing
- Adopting rigid eating rituals



Getting Help

Parents who believe that their teen has an eating disorder have several options when it comes to getting help. The first step is to talk to your teen about their eating issues and taking them to see a doctor. From there, doctors can address the eating disorder with one or more treatment options, including nutrition education and healthy eating plans. Those with binge eating disorder may also need a supervised weight loss program. Many teens with eating disorders benefit from psychotherapy to address the mental issues associated with their condition. In severe cases, hospitalization may be necessary for a full recovery.

It's important to know that, though many teens may deny that they have an eating disorder or avoid getting help, it's important for those affected to get treatment as soon as possible.

11 Mistakes Parents Make With Teen Discipline - What Not to Do When Disciplining Teenagers

Raging hormones, misunderstandings, raised voices, restrictions and curfews come to mind for many when they hear the phrase “teen discipline.” But wouldn’t you rather think of respect, transitioning into adulthood, rational discussions and reasonable behavior?

The recipe for raising children requires a delicate balance of authority and love and, with teens that balance becomes even more precarious. How can you discipline your teen without destroying your relationship?

Teens in Charleston, S.C. were surveyed to find out what they thought were the biggest mistakes parents make when disciplining their teenagers. Here were the top two:

Lack of Consistency

While all children need consistent discipline, it’s even more important for teens. They get frustrated when a behavior is acceptable one day and not acceptable the next. The established rules need specific consequences. Realistic and consistent consequences demonstrate a “real world” view for teens. Creating house rules with consequences, then responding appropriately, provides all children with security and direction.

Not Listening

Parents want to be respected but don’t always return that respect by listening to their teenager. Not listening to your teen expresses that you don’t feel he has anything valuable to say. Even when disagreeing, teens should be given time to express their feelings and thoughts. This shouldn’t give a teen the right to be ugly or behave inappropriately, of course. Modeling and developing guidelines for how argumentative ideas should be expressed is essential. If you want to be heard, learn to listen.



Punishing in Anger

Angel, 16, says she “just shuts down” when her father gets angry and starts yelling. Sometimes parents only punish once they have reached the end of their patience. In reality, this allows teens to misbehave for a period of time before suffering any consequences. Not only is this confusing, it can also lead to abuse.

Dealing with a teenager emotionally often produces dramatic immediate effects, but ultimately it creates a communication wall in the relationship. Consistent parenting, as described above, prevents punishing in anger. Stepping away from the situation to recover emotionally also proves helpful.

Irrelevant Punishment

Whenever possible, the punishment should be reflective of wrongdoing. For example, if a teen returns home after curfew, limiting his nights out temporarily would be appropriate.

A teen that doesn't complete school work might be required to miss a social event to complete the work. If the teen misses the social event as a punishment, but doesn't actually do school work, the consequences don't make sense and just seem spiteful.

Accepting Any Behavior Because of Age

Although it's a scientific fact that teens undergo traumatic emotional and physical changes, that fact should not be an excuse to be allowed to behave inappropriately. Often, teens who are allowed to behave badly do not grow out of that behavior as adults. Character is character at any age. Behavioral expectations should be related to what is right, not the age of the child.

Using Guilt Rather Than Reason

Guilt may create an immediate response, but this style of discipline actually promotes internal emotional issues for teens that may not be dealt with until adulthood, if ever. Reasoning with a teenager, providing a basis for your expectations and consequences, does not always evoke an immediate response, but the long-term results are typically more positive.

Being a Friend Rather Than a Parent

Teens usually have more than enough social outlets. They need boundaries and safe, secure situations in which to grow. You are the provider of both, and when you act like a friend, your teen will lose security. Teens who view their parents as authority figures and providers are more likely to be close to them in adulthood.

Despite what appearances might suggest, teens do not respect parents who behave like teens. Relating to your teen, based on your own experiences, can be a successful method of working through challenging situations, but at no time should you lose your parent status.

Attack the Person Rather Than the Behavior

It's essential to make sure your teen knows that you love him despite anything he does. Even greater, you love him enough to not let him develop behaviors that may be harmful to him or anyone else. Direct your criticisms and comments at the behavior, not the teen.

If your teen fails a course due to lack of effort, don't use phrases like "You're lazy" or "You'll never do well because you don't try." While you may even feel that these thoughts are accurate at the time, they only condemn and don't solve the real issue.

Focus on the behavior that created the problem such as not studying or not asking for needed help.

Be sure to express that you're not only confident that the behavior can change, but you're expecting it to change. Then work together on specific restrictions and actions that need to take place for the behavior to improve.

You Become the Enemy

At times, you may feel like the enemy, and your teenager might actually refer to you as such. No matter how hurt you may feel it's important to remain the one person who consistently stands by your teenager. Friends and teachers will come and go. You will always be the parent.

By establishing rules and consequences, you're the one person in your teen's life that holds him accountable no matter what. Even if we don't like authority figures in our lives, they typically establish order and security.

Lose your Sense of Humor

It's not funny when your teenager messes up, particularly when you're left to clean up the mess. Losing your sense of humor won't help.

It may not seem funny at the time, but most challenging situations can eventually be viewed in a comical way. If your teen feels comfortable laughing and joking with you regularly, he'll also be more likely to listen when you get serious.

Stopping your Teen from failing at all Costs

Some of life's greatest lessons result from failing. Parents who micromanage their teens because they are afraid of their teen failing prevent their child from developing important life skills. As much as you don't want to have to discipline your teen, letting him fail and living with the consequences can teach him more than your chosen punishment.

Several teens expressed that they want their parents to be parents. When the roles in the household become skewed, confusion and chaos soon follow. Teenagers with younger siblings tended to feel that their parents maintained their essential roles, while the youngest children and only children found their parents more likely to blur the lines between friend and parent.

Teens who described their parents as tough disciplinarians also expressed feeling loved in the process.

Other teens, such as Peter, 15, said, "I know how to work my parents. I know when to ask them for what I want and when to stay out of their way. I'm sure they love me, but they don't really know me."

Teens deal with so many issues outside the home that having a stable, established home life makes all the difference.

3 Tips for Raising Teenagers

We've all experienced being a teenager – those years where we were in the throes of raging hormones, dealing with peer pressure, and trying to gain some independence, all while struggling to find our place in life. While the teenage years can be tumultuous for your child, being the parent of a teenager can be just as trying. But you, as a parent, can help guide your teenager through this period of their lives with an understanding, but controlled hand, even in the face of resistance.

Gone may be the days when your sweet, baby-faced little boy or girl worshipped the ground you walked on and never wanted you to leave their sight. Now it may seem like your teenager loathes you and can't wait to get away from you. The years between age 12 and 18 are a time where the voluntary separation of teenager from the parents is a natural occurrence. However, while they may be pushing you away, they also need you more than ever, and that's the most important thing to recognize as a parent. Teenagers experience all kinds of physical, mental, emotional and social changes. They're trying to find a way to cope with and adapt to these changes at the same time that you're trying to find ways to cope with their changes. Here are some lessons in good parenting to make raising teenagers a successful endeavor for your sanity and their future.

Talk the Talk and Walk the Walk

Your teenager not only needs rules and boundaries, they also subconsciously want rules and boundaries because it actually shows that you are invested in their well-being. For more tips on how to give your kids what they really need, read *Good Parenting*. One of the most beneficial things you can do for your teenager is to set rules and boundaries and outline the consequences for breaking those rules. But here's the catch. Setting rules and boundaries and outlining consequences is worth nothing if you're not willing to follow through with implementing those consequences. You hand over the power to your teenager if you go back on your word, and the only thing they learn is that your word means nothing and everything can be tested.

Try including your teenagers in the rule-making process (only if they're mature enough and only for the rules that are non-negotiable). Parents are often fickle with their rules because they want their teen to consider them a friend rather than an authority figure. But your teen doesn't need another friend – they need a mentor. Don't be scared of your teenager. It's OK if your rules are unpopular with your teen's friends or other parents. You are raising your teenager! If your teen gets whiny, angry and upset over a well-deserved punishment, let them carry it out.

If your teenager continuously breaks rules or is out of control, you are allowed to take drastic measures, such as taking everything out of their room except for their bed. Actions like these may seem harsh, but the lesson you are teaching your teenager can be priceless. Your teenager will make mistakes, there's no doubt about it. That's just part of what is called "growing up." But, with your help, your teenager will also make good decisions, and those decisions should be acknowledged and praised. If teenagers meet their parent's expectations, they'll also learn the importance of meeting expectations at school, in sports, in their future careers, and even in their future adult relationships. The key is not to control, but to foster good values, which in turn, will lead to better choices.

Foster Communication

You shouldn't be too alarmed if your teenager is no longer the Chatty Cathy or Carl they were when they were younger. Teenagers tend to inwardly reflect on their life while sometimes acting annoyed when parents ask questions. When your teenager does talk, listen! Remember that teenagers are exploring new ideas, feelings and beliefs. Encourage them to do so in a healthy way, even when those feelings and beliefs are contrary to what you believe.

You should also initiate conversation with your teen whenever possible. Make sure they know that you're there for them if they ever want to talk about anything. Take whatever moments you can with your teenager and use them to talk, such as on the way home from school (the car is a typical place for chatter). If you disapprove of a behavior your child is exhibiting, instead of attacking their personality, tell them "I love you, but I disapprove of such and such behavior."

Get Connected

If your relationship with your teenager isn't at its best, don't give up. Seeing that you're making an effort is important to your teen, and he or she will be more likely to be receptive to improving your relationship. Take an interest in your teenager's life, from who their friends and teachers are, their sports activities and especially their activities after and outside of school. Studies have shown that the more involved you are, the less likely your child will engage in high-risk activities, such as drugs, alcohol, stealing, and sex.

It is possible to raise a happy and healthy teenager, or to raise a teenager who, in the future due to your good parenting, will be happy and healthy. Also remember that your relationship with your teen might be great one day and not the next. You don't have to try to make it ideal every day. But when the moments arise to listen and teach, don't let them pass you by. When you strike a balance between love, stability, guidance and communication, you're providing your teenager a step ahead in the game of life.

10 Ways to Discourage Teen Drinking - Learn How to Prevent Teenage Drinking

Teen drinking is a serious problem among today's youth. Binge drinking teens can end up in courtrooms, emergency rooms, and cemeteries. Sadly, teen alcohol use remains a prevalent cause of risk-taking behavior among kids between the ages of 13 and 19. Teen drinking and driving is just the tip of the iceberg; teen drinking problems can lead to violence, unprotected sexual encounters, and serious medical issues like blackouts, alcohol poisoning, and delirium tremens. Busy parents may fail to fully warn, guide, and protect their children from illegal use of alcoholic products, but moms and dads have the greatest responsibility and best opportunities for discouraging teen drinking, as outlined in the following 10 tips.



Set a Positive Example

Parents that drink on a regular basis, and especially in the home, can hardly expect their teenage children not to follow their example. Practicing what you preach is especially effective in this case, because teenagers are very sensitive to hypocrisy and sometimes go out of their way to expose it or respond in parallel fashion.

While social drinking may be acceptable in your family, make sure your kids understand the parameters for adults as well as for teens to eliminate possible misunderstandings or a double standard. If you must keep liquor in your home, check it frequently to see if someone might be getting into it. Some kids will have a glass of wine and replace the amount they drank with water so the bottle appears to be as full as before. Even if your kids aren't drinking, their friends might be involved in teen drinking, in your absence, so keep an eye on your supply.

Monitor Your Teen's School Behavior

When kids start to experiment with alcohol, their schoolwork is one of the first areas to suffer. If you are hearing from the teacher or administrator that your child is not completing homework, not coming to class regularly, not paying attention, or exhibiting questionable behavior, these are warning signs that a parent needs to check out to find their cause. There's a good chance that teen drinking problems may be the source of the problem.

Keep an Eye on Social Activities

If your teen has a driver's license, be aware that many alcohol-related problems in this age group stem from teen drinking and driving. Most laws that punish driving under the influence issue stiffer penalties than before. This can be a good thing for your son or daughter if previous guidance and warnings have not been able to prevent teenage drinking. Obviously, it's better for all concerned if parents are able to prevent teens from drinking in the first place. Know where your teen is going, who will be included, and what they will be doing, as well as how to reach them. Keep contact information handy, and be able to check in at any time to be sure they are doing what they claim. An occasional random check-in by the parent is probably a good idea.



Network with Other Parents

To monitor your teens' whereabouts and social activities, it will be helpful to get to know the other parents of his or her friends. This will help you understand your teen's social environment and potential peer pressure or expectations. Responsible parents that know and respect each other's standards can help to enforce them when the kids visit each other's homes.

Learn the Teen Drinking Laws in your State

If you don't already know the drunken driving laws in your state, now is the time to learn them. You need to know what your community will and will not accept in terms of teenage drinking. Virtually all states in the U.S. prohibit teen drinking up to age 21. Find out the laws on drunk driving so you can warn your teen. Chances are the risks include losing a driver's license or getting points, increased insurance rates, and possible jail time with a fine. Make sure your teen understands these laws, too, before getting a driver's license or riding with other teens that drive.

Use Training Resources

Look for easy-to-read pamphlets at the driver's license bureau that your teen can read to learn more about drunk driving and the law.

You can also watch a television movie or video rental together that includes drunken driving scenes and possibly, accidents. Afterward, discuss the outcomes with your teenagers to make sure they understand the serious consequences.

State Household Rules Clearly

Along with driving privileges, other household rules need to be communicated clearly to your teens so they know what to expect. You may want to remind them on occasion when they leave the house about not driving with anyone who is drinking alcoholic beverages (including themselves). Let them know clearly what will happen if you find out they have been drinking and driving.

Discipline Consistently

Teen alcohol abuse should be punished for two reasons: First, it breaks the civil law and may endanger the teen and other people. Second, it breaks the household rules and flaunts parental authority. Suspending driving privileges is a realistic consequence that you can consider if you hear about teenage drinking and driving. Depending on circumstances, you may decide to forgive the first offense or merely issue a warning. But when parents are inconsistent about disciplining teen drinking problems, the kids may keep trying to get away with it and cause even more serious problems.

Offer Unconditional but Tough Love

Sometimes even the best-behaved teen will slip and make a mistake. While this can be very disappointing for a concerned parent, we have to remember our own youthful follies and take this opportunity to make the mistake a learning opportunity. After issuing a consequence or disciplining your teen for teenage drinking, remind your son or daughter of your commitment to be a loving, firm, and fair parent. Whether or not the child understands now, in the future he probably will, and undoubtedly will appreciate your protective efforts.

Stay in Touch with your Teens

Don't wait for problems to develop before having a talk with your teenager. Spend time daily in conversation, sharing each other's lives and having fun together. Be available to discuss problems and offer advice when needed without becoming overly intrusive. Teen drinking problems are less likely to occur in families that demonstrate love and acceptance of each other by communicating well and often. Kids need parental guidance as they come of age. Failure to provide it means teens will take their cues from others that are perhaps less equipped to provide sensible leadership.

No parent wants to deal with teen drinking. Binge drinking teens cause difficult problems for themselves and those that love them, and sometimes for others, too. Give your teen clear rules about social behavior and acceptable conduct. Make sure she knows what you mean and understands the consequences of disobedience. With love, communication, and staying connected, many cases of teen drinking can be prevented, making society safer for our kids and other people.

Is Your Teen Hanging Out With The Wrong Crowd?

If your teen was hanging out with the wrong crowd, how would you know? Have you noticed a change in behavior or a lack of respect for what used to be important? Bad influence from befriending the wrong people shows up in various ways and peer pressure gives teens a new attitude about life that may not be to the liking of all parents. Is your teen hanging in the wrong crowds?

Understanding Helps Stop Teen Smoking

If you look at the statistics in recent years, it does not take a rocket scientist to know how vital it is to stop teen smoking. At one point in your life the people and culture around you probably influenced you, especially during the teen years. As a parent today, you will notice that your child has even more challenges than ever before when it comes to drugs, violence, and tobacco usage. As our society changes with each passing decade, it is no surprise that today's teenagers have a heavy burden on their shoulders. This is why it is important for you to realize how imperative it is to help stop teen smoking by educating your children at any age about the consequences. Teens encounter a lot of peer pressure and social changes when they are in middle school and high school. Emotions are always changing due to the hormone changes taking place in the body. Part of this burden is avoiding harmful habits, like cigarette smoking.



According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), 23% of high school students and 8% of middle school students in the United States are smokers. In both instances, more females than males were cigarette smokers; Caucasians are also at the top of the percentage mark for cigarette smokers among teens. Is there a way to stop this phenomenon from reaching to greater heights? The 2006 statistics are astonishing. It should give every single parent and guardian even more incentive to end this trend not only in the United States, but also in other countries as well through proper education and guidance.

Health Watch

Some of the medical complications due to smoking include symptoms of COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease), heart diseases, lung problems, cancer, infections and more.

Why do Teens Start Smoking

Therapists, child psychologists and health professionals have spent a tremendous amount of research and time asking the question, "Why?"

The bottom line with why teens pick up habits like cigarette smoking is because they have encountered some form of outside influence. Teens do not just wake up one morning and think, "Hey, I think I'm going to start smoking today." They have to see or experience it from someone else or the media.

Peer pressure is perhaps the biggest obstacle in the efforts to stop teen smoking. Nevertheless, other causes lead teens to develop this harmful habit. About.com listed several reasons why teens decide to start smoking. Besides peer pressure, many teens pick up smoking because they see one or both parents smoking. Since others easily influence

teens, if they see a person they admire smoking, they make feel that it is okay for them to try it and in fact, they may even feel that it is the mature thing to do. If you want to help stop teen smoking, perhaps you should examine your own actions and think about what kind of behavior you are indirectly encouraging.

Teens that begin smoking are influenced by media campaigns promoting cigarette smoking, making it appear “cool” and “hip.” Rebellious teens pick up the habit because they know it is forbidden to kids under a certain age, and should be resigned as an adult activity. Most teenagers do not realize the actions they take during their youth will have dire consequences later on down the road. Instead, they feel invincible, and able to do whatever they please without holding up to the consequences. It is not so easy to ask them to stop.

Teen smoking has also been associated with weight loss. With our weight-obsessed society focusing on all the latest trends that help women shed pound, some teens may pick this up as a quick fix. Some say that a cigarette in the mouth quenches the oral fixation and may reduce the need to eat. The need to be a certain weight and the stress of living up to unrealistic expectations often drives teenagers to pick up a cigarette. The irony here is that even though the goal is lose weight, people can end up gaining weight as they try to break the habit.

Influences of Peer Pressure

As stated earlier, peer pressure is the biggest reason why teenagers decide to start smoking.



Pre-teens and teenagers are extremely susceptible to what their friends are doing and to what the hottest celebrities do in their own lives. You probably came under the same influence when you were a teenager. When we are able to tackle the influences of peer pressure, we will be successful in the campaign to stop teen smoking.

Phillip Morris USA discusses ways that parents can understand the influences behind peer pressure in the hopes that it will lower or stop teen smoking. What Phillip Morris found is that teenagers and pre-teens with friends who smoke will be 10 times more likely to begin smoking too. When you look at it in those terms, it should not be too surprising to realize that kids who have friends that refrain from smoking will not develop the habit themselves.

When the CDC released their statistics on youth smoking from 2006, the studies showed that four thousand teenagers and pre-teens, falling between the ages of twelve and seventeen, would begin cigarette smoking each day.

In recent years, children are more inclined to listen to friends instead of parents, because they fear losing friendships by not participating in what is cool. With all that is going on with their hormones, the last thing most teens want is to be made fun of, especially in front of other people, and this kind of peer pressure is what jump-starts a lot of teenage smoking.

Peer pressure influences teenagers because they do not know how to say no to their friends. In high school, many teens are driving and able to attend parties and gatherings with their friends. This type of environment is where your teen will be pressured to try drugs, alcohol, and especially cigarettes. Your teen needs the resources before going into battle against their peers. Those resources inevitably come from you.

How Parents Can Help

Parents are the main ingredient to stop teen smoking. There are helpful resources on the Internet and in your local library or bookstore that can give you a jump-start on how to keep your teen from smoking. The biggest challenge for you, as a parent, is to keep the communication lines open between you and your teen. Whether you realize it or not, teens do want guidance from their parents, and your influence is crucial to their decision-making.



Teens will be somewhat influenced by pop culture and their friends, but if they have a solid set of values and parental understanding behind them, it will be easier to resist peer pressure. The first thing to do as a parent is look for openings when you can talk to your teen about smoking.

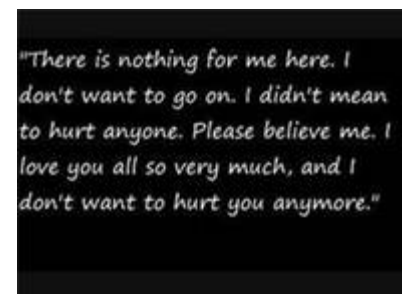
It could be during an anti-smoking campaign, or walking by a group of teenagers who are smoking. It could even be as simple as asking questions about smoking at your teen's school during dinner.

Once you have initiated the conversation and the talk about why smoking is bad for your health, it is important to continue those talks. One time is not going to let your teen know how much you care and why it is important not to smoke. It has to be a constant topic of conversation before it sinks in and makes sense to him or her. When talking with your teen, it is also important to listen and ask questions so he feels like it is an interactive conversation instead of an inquisition.

The quest to stop teen smoking is a hard road to battle, but there is a light at the end of the tunnel. Parents need to talk with their children, starting at an early age, as a way to help them understand why smoking is harmful to their health. Teenagers are facing enough challenges as they grow up in a world full of convoluted messages and temptations. You, as a parent, can be their beacon to adulthood by helping your teen make smart decisions that will affect the rest of her life.

Importance of Teen Suicide Prevention

Teens are under enormous pressure and stress. They are competing in school for good grades, they are faced with college applications and job hunting. Teen suicide is an unfortunate result of all the pressures and stresses. Knowing how to help with teen suicide prevention can save lives because it focuses on helping teens realize that life is too special to commit suicide. All adults can play an active role in helping teens during the difficult periods of their lives and assist with teen suicide prevention.



Many adults are in denial that teen suicide is a real problem. It is important to acknowledge that teens are at risk for depression, anxiety and other emotional disorders. Adults cannot take the attitude that part of being a teen is feeling pressures and stresses. Kids can get over bad feelings and become more responsible. Adults need to understand that not all children are the same. Some teens will have a difficult time handling the feelings that are bottled up inside of them. Accepting that each teen is different and copes differently to situations will make helping teens easier for everyone.

Have you noticed a child in your class, neighborhood, church or Scouts that never seems to smile or laugh? Have you noticed a kid that seems distant and out of touch with other peers? Is there a teen that has suddenly dropped out of the group for no apparent reason? Adults can pay attention to the teens around them and notice the differences. Adults can talk to the teen about their feelings. Let the parents of the teen know that you have noticed a difference or the child is no longer participating in activities.

Parents have hectic schedules. Many parents are single parents or have limited visitation times. Intervening and letting the parent know that a teen is showing signs that something is wrong is being helpful and caring about the child. You can step forward and talk to the parents and the teen separately. Drawing attention to the behavior changes is a positive way to get involved and help the teen. A person that is suicidal feels that no-one cares about them or will notice that they are gone. You noticing that the teen that dropped out of a group or is not as active anymore might be the one thing that the child needs to truly see that they do make a positive difference in the world.

You should approach parents with kindness and concern. Do not tell them that they are too busy to notice what their child is doing. Teens act differently in various settings. How the teen acts in a group or class might be very different from how they act at home. Teen suicide prevention can be difficult because often the kids are very good at hiding how badly they feel about life until it is too late. Letting the parents and the teen know of your concern can be the door that opens up communication between the two.



One terrific and easy thing to do is provide hotline numbers to kids. Look up local hotlines for teens and make a list. Tape the list to the refrigerator and back of bathroom doors. When a teen cannot talk to people around them, the hotlines are there for them to use.

Do not make a big issue about the list but simply let the kids know that it is there for them to use if they want it. Teachers can print a list to hand out at the beginning of the school year with the class syllabus or post the list on the classroom wall. All teens need to know that there are places that they can talk about their feelings and feel safe. Having hotlines available will give the kids a starting point to get help.

Adults can be on the alert for changes in behavior that might indicate a child is suicidal. Have grades changed? Has the teen dropped out of activities that they normally enjoy? Is the teen isolating themselves from friends? Does the teen seem sad or worried a lot of the time? Is the teen having sleep problems or sleeping too much? Have eating habits drastically changed? Is the teen giving away treasured items? Adults have to be on the alert for changes in behavior that could signal the teen is depressed, worried or stressed.

If you suspect that a child is suicidal get help for the teen immediately. Talk to the family health care provider about resources available in your community. It is better to air on the side of caution and help then to feel embarrassed, ashamed or silly. Adults have to put aside their personal feelings when it comes to teen suicide prevention. Getting the child help and evaluated is the best way to help the teen when you feel that there might be a risk for the child. We often forget that teens are children that still need guidance and assistance from adults.

Even though they are transitioning into adulthood, teens are still young and need help from others.

Everyone wants to feel love, needed and wanted in life. Teens are no exception. Build your teen up with praise, encouragement and support. Make eye contact when listening to a teen and respond to them. Many times teens do not feel that they are being heard or anyone cares. Let the teen know how special and important they are to you. We cannot tuck them into bed or kiss the boo-boos away anymore. Take time to sit and talk with your teens or to simply listen to them. Show an interest in their lives and what is happening in their social lives. You can be active in the teen's life by paying extra attention to the good things that the child does and focus less on the mistakes. Let the teen know that you believe in them and that things will work themselves out.

Talking about suicide and depression is difficult for most people. If you suspect that your child is suicidal ask them directly. Having the topic out in the open is part of the process for teen suicide prevention. The teen will then know that you have noticed the changes and are concerned about them. Do not challenge the teen or become angry. Children do not want to get into trouble and will often deny their suicidal feelings. If you can get the teen to talk about the feelings then you can start to help them solve their problems. Most importantly you can let them know how terribly sad and lonely you would be without them in your life.

Teens can commit suicide because more methods are available to them than in the past. Part of the job of adults is to make sure that teens have fewer methods available to kill themselves with. If you suspect a teen is suicidal or they are receiving professional help for suicide get rid of anything that can be used in the home. Remove guns, knives, pills, scissors, ropes, curtains, cleaning supplies, kitchen utensils and anything else you can think of that the teen might use to commit suicide. Let the teen know that you are removing the items to protect them. Do not make a big issue about removing items but simply get them out of the house. Remind them that you care very much about them and would miss them greatly if they were not around anymore.

Noticing the changes in teens around you is the primary focus of teen suicide prevention. Become actively involved in teen suicide prevention by talking to the teens, to parents and to professional health care providers. Let teens know that they do make a difference in the world and will be greatly missed if they commit suicide. Focus on helping the teen realize that there are solutions and answers to their problems and that they are loved.

Is Your Teen Sleep Deprived? Why Getting Enough Sleep Isn't Just a Luxury

Your teenager seems to nap all day long, but it's not what you think. It could be sleep deprivation, which can lead to depression, obesity and other health conditions. Read why their bodies tell them to sleep more...

Sleep deprivation can be summed up as a chronic lack of adequate sleep. Too little sleep – even one hour less a night – develops over time into a “sleep debt.” This sleep debt can accumulate and is only wiped out when enough sleep is obtained. And sleeping more on weekends may not completely erase the debt.



Switching back and forth from late hours on weekends to early hours on weekdays may even exacerbate the problem.

If sleep debt becomes too great, it causes sleepiness and can negatively affect performance, concentration, reaction time, memory, mood, and behavior control. A teen's physical growth can even be affected by a chronic lack of sleep, since growth hormone is most active during sleep.

Teens need about nine hours of sleep per night, yet on average get around seven hours. Not getting enough sleep is only part of the problem, as sleep patterns also change during adolescence. Changes related to puberty cause the sleep hormone melatonin to be released later in the day, which alters the circadian rhythms and, in turn, the sleep-wake cycle. The result is teens fall asleep later and wake up later. While this altered schedule is recognized as a normal part of puberty, it has not changed the fact that many middle and high schools have early start times, cutting into possible sleep time.

School Performance

One of the most troubling effects of sleep deprivation is a drop in memory and attention, making learning more difficult and negatively impacting school performance.

In a study published in *Child Development*, researchers studied the sleep habits of 3,120 high school students. They then compared sleep habits to mood, school performance, and behavior. They found that struggling students went to bed 40 minutes later and had 25 fewer minutes of sleep than the students earning better grades. The students who got less sleep also experienced increased sleepiness during the day, depressed mood, and behavior problems. Even this small difference in sleep seemed to affect the way adolescents functioned during the daytime.



Obesity

An estimated 32% of children and teens aged 2-19 are either overweight or obese, which may lead to serious consequences, like a shortened life expectancy in adulthood. What role does sleep play? Studies have shown that shorter sleep duration in children and teens increased the risk of them being overweight and obese. Studies have also found that kids who try to get "catch up" sleep on the weekends and holidays may actually be able to reduce their risk for becoming overweight or obese.

Depression

Too little sleep can also contribute to a negative self-image and depression. A study in the journal, *Sleep Medicine*, looked at the rate of depression among those with various sleep disorders. While previous studies centered on sleep apnea and narcolepsy, the researchers broadened their study to include insomnia, inadequate-sleep-and-wake hygiene, and restless legs syndrome.

The results showed a high rate of depression in people with sleep disorders. Over half of the 917 study participants were found to have some form of depression, while 3.5% experienced a moderate or severe form of depression. The researchers recommended that sleep-deprived patients should routinely be evaluated for depression.

Drowsy Driving

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration attributes 100,000 crashes annually to drowsy drivers. Sleepiness and driving are a lethal combination because of slower reaction times, decreased attention, and a slower rate of information processing. Young drivers, especially those 16-29 years old, are among the highest at risk for drowsy driving.

In a study in the journal *Human Factors*, driving performance of sleep-deprived subjects was compared to those who were alcohol impaired. Sixty-four participants were tested. Some were partially deprived of sleep, receiving only four hours of sleep the night before testing, while others received no sleep the night before testing. The rest were given alcohol to induce a blood level of 0.07%. All participants were then tested during two hours of simulated driving.

Two groups, the alcohol group and the no-sleep group did poorly when trying to stay in the lane while driving, and the researchers termed their driving safety as critical. The partially sleep-deprived group experienced a decline but was categorized as non-critical.

Sleep Measures

Getting enough sleep is more than a good idea. It restores us both physically and mentally. If your teen is irritable, has difficulty waking, or falls asleep spontaneously, sleep deprivation may be the culprit. Have your teen try the following steps to create a balance between sleep and a busy calendar:

- Establish a calming bedtime routine.
- Avoid stimulating activities, like computer games or television, before bed.
- Steer clear of caffeine and nicotine after 12 in the afternoon.
- Keep to a regular bedtime, even on weekends.
- Make sure the bedroom is conducive to sleep—drawn blinds, no lights, TV, or computer.
- Sleep in on the weekends, but no more than 2-3 hours later than normal.
- Achieve a balanced schedule and avoid overloading.

Also, you can be a role model for your teen by having good sleep habits.

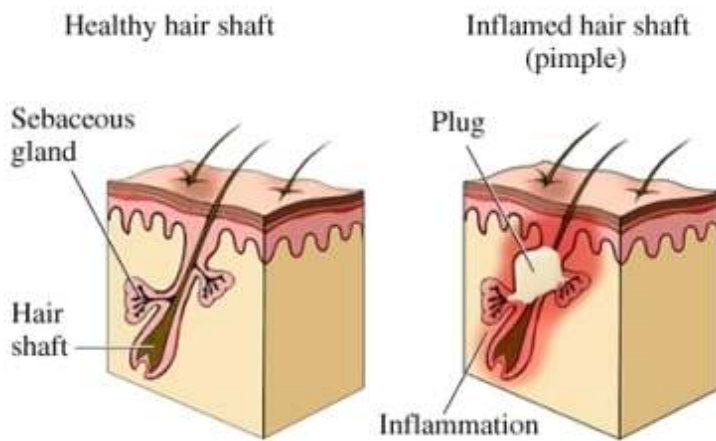
Acne (Pimples; Blackheads; Whiteheads; Acne Vulgaris)

Acne occurs when the pores of the skin become clogged, inflamed, and sometimes infected. These clogged pores can result in blackheads, whiteheads, or pimples. Acne tends to occur in teenagers, but can also occur in adults.

Causes

Acne starts in the skin's sebaceous glands. These glands secrete an oily substance called sebum. The sebum normally travels through a tiny hair follicle from the gland to the skin's surface. Sometimes the sebum becomes trapped, mixing with dead skin cells and bacteria. This causes clogged pores called comedones.

Pimple



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Blackheads are comedones that reach the skin's surface. Whiteheads are comedones that stay beneath the surface of the skin. Small red bumps, pimples, and cysts may also develop. The main causes of acne include:

- Changes in levels of male hormones called androgens
- Increased sebum production
- Changes inside the hair follicle
- Bacteria

Risk Factors

A risk factor is something that increases your chances of getting a disease or condition.

- Age: between 12-24 years old
- Race: Caucasian
- Changes in hormone levels, such as during:
 - Puberty
 - Pregnancy
 - Before a menstrual period
- Stress
- Certain medicines (e.g., androgens, lithium, and barbiturates)
- Certain cosmetic products

Symptoms

Acne symptoms vary from person to person and can range from mild to severe. They include:

- Excess oil in the skin
- Blackheads
- Whiteheads
- Papules—small pink bumps that may be tender to the touch
- Pimples—inflamed, pus-filled bumps that may be red at the base (also called pustules)
- Nodules—large, painful, solid lumps that are lodged deep within the skin
- Cysts—deep, inflamed, pus-filled lumps that can cause pain and scarring

Diagnosis

The doctor will examine the areas of your skin with the most sebaceous glands like the face, neck, back, chest, and shoulders. If your acne is severe, you may be referred to a dermatologist, a skin specialist.

Treatment

Acne may require a combination of treatments. But, most acne does not require surgery. Some treatments may take several weeks to work. Your skin may actually appear to get worse before it gets better.

Medications

- Over-the-counter topical medicines (e.g., cleansers, creams, lotions, and gels)—to reduce the amount of oil and/or bacteria in the pores; may contain one or more of the following ingredients:
 - Benzoyl peroxide
 - Salicylic acid
 - Sulfur
 - Resorcinol
- Prescription topical medicine—includes cleansers, creams, lotions, and gels to reduce the amount of oil and/or bacteria in the pores, for example:
 - Antibiotics, such as clindamycin (Cleocin T), erythromycin
 - Tretinoin (Retin-A, Avita)
 - Adapalene (Differin)
 - Azelaic acid (Azelex)
 - Tazarotene (Tazorac)
 - Dapsone (Aczone)
- Oral antibiotics—aimed at controlling the amount of bacteria in pores, including:
 - Doxycycline
 - Minocycline
 - Tetracycline
 - Erythromycin
 - Clindamycin
 - Amoxicillin
 - Cephalosporins
 - Sulfamethoxazole and trimethoprim
- Oral medicines—aimed at controlling androgen levels, including:
 - Birth control pills—Pills that have a combination of hormones (estrogen and progestin) may be the most effective in improving acne.
 - Spironolactone
- Oral retinoids—aimed at reducing the size and secretions of sebaceous glands. Only for severe cases of cystic acne.
 - Isotretinoin (Accutane)—must not be taken by women who are pregnant or who may become pregnant because of the risks of serious birth defects

Procedures

There are a number of procedures that can be used to treat acne, examples include:

- Corticosteroids—the injection of corticosteroid directly into the cyst; mostly used for large, cystic acne lesions
- Acne surgery—specialized extractors are used to open, drain, and remove contents of acne lesions
- Acne scar revision—procedures done to minimize acne scars, such as:
 - Chemical peels—uses glycolic acid and other chemical agents to loosen blackheads and decrease acne papules
 - Dermabrasion —"sandpapers" the skin to smooth it out
 - Scar excision—uses a tiny punch tool or a scalpel to remove scars
 - Collagen fillers—fill the pits of scars with a collagen substance
 - Laser resurfacing—removes scars and tightens underlying skin
- Phototherapy —skin is exposed to an ultraviolet (UV) light source for a set amount of time to treat acne

Some of the procedures have risks, like scarring and infection.

Prevention

It can be difficult to prevent acne from occurring. This is because it can be difficult to control the factors that cause it. But, there are some things you can do to keep your acne from getting worse:

- Gently wash your face with mild soap and warm water twice a day (no more than twice) to remove excess oil. Scrubbing or washing too often can make acne worse.
- When washing your face:
 - Use your hands rather than a washcloth
 - Use mild soap
 - Allow your face to dry before applying any lotion
- Do not pick at or squeeze blemishes.
- Use lotions, soaps, and cosmetics labeled noncomedogenic. This means it won't clog your pores.
- Use topical acne treatments only as directed. Using them more often could make your condition worse.
- Recognize and limit emotional stress.
- Wear sunscreen year-round. This is especially important if you are using medicine that can make your skin more sensitive to the sun.

Drinking Soda Increases Girls' Risk of Osteoporosis - *The Latest in the Soda vs. Milk Debate*

Drinking soda instead of milk reduces girls' calcium intake, putting them at higher risk of developing osteoporosis later in life, studies have found. But, conversely, studies also have found that increased soft drink consumption didn't negatively affect calcium intake. What to make of the studies?

It may come as no surprise that most children and teens will choose soft drinks over milk when given a choice. This is unfortunate, since milk and other calcium-rich foods are especially important during the bone-building years of childhood and adolescence.



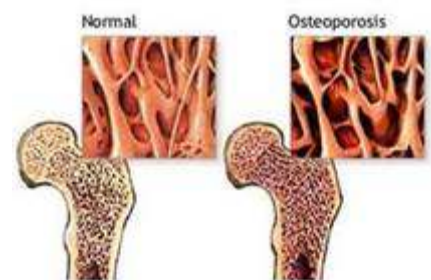
Lower bone mineral density in adolescence has been associated with an increased risk of osteoporosis later in life, especially in girls. This has led many public school educators to follow the advice of school nutritionists and replace soft drinks in school vending machines with milk, water, and 100% fruit juices. Will this really help young girls build stronger bones?

There have been many research studies on dietary intake and its relation to the bone health of young girls, the results of which have been mixed. But overall, it seems reasonable to conclude that school-age girls who drink a lot of carbonated soft drinks are increasing their risk of osteoporosis.

Evidence for the Health Claim

Osteoporosis is a disease that gradually weakens bones until they break easily. Since your bones reach their peak mass and strength during your 20s, the more bone mineral density (BMD) you build when you are young, the less likely you are to develop osteoporosis later in life.

Exercise and diet are two important factors that influence children's bone health. Performing weight-bearing activities and eating a diet that contains plenty of calcium-rich foods have been shown to build stronger bones. What's more, some studies have suggested that certain soft drinks may directly interfere with healthy bone growth.



A study in the *Journal of Bone and Mineral Research* found that the more carbonated soft drinks girls (aged 12-15) drank, the lower their BMD. There was no consistent relationship, however, between BMD and soft drink consumption in boys.

Two other studies found that consuming soft drinks was associated with an increased risk of bone fractures in school-age girls. In the first study, published in the *Journal of Adolescent Health*, researchers found that 14-year-old girls who drank the most cola were 3.6 times more likely to have bone fractures than those who drank the least. The second study, published in the *Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine*, revealed that the girls who drank carbonated beverages were 3.1 times more likely to have bone fractures than those who did not.

Experts are not sure how drinking soft drinks could adversely affect bone health, but they have proposed a couple of possible explanations. First, laboratory studies have reported that high levels of phosphorus intake could lead to the breakdown of bones; soft drinks contain phosphoric acid. Second, children may drink soft drinks *instead of* milk and other calcium-fortified beverages.

One study in the *Journal of the American College of Nutrition* found that children aged 1-5 years who drank soft drinks and sugary beverages tended to drink less milk.

Evidence against the Health Claim

While most studies support the notion that soft drink consumption has a negative impact on calcium intake, others have suggested the opposite.

Researchers found that increased soft drink consumption was *positively* associated with calcium intake. Similarly, a study in the *Journal of the American College of Nutrition* found that children who drank more soft drinks and other non-dairy beverages had higher calcium intakes.

As an explanation for their findings, the authors of this study suggested that milk and soft drinks don't necessarily replace each other. In other words, children who pour themselves a glass of soda to eat with their pizza may be just as likely to down a glass of milk with a cookie.

Conclusion

While the research is a bit conflicted, there is sufficient evidence to conclude that young girls who regularly consume soft drinks are placing themselves at increased risk for future osteoporosis. To help build strong bones, children and teens should participate in weight-bearing activity (e.g., running, jumping rope, gymnastics, tennis, basketball) and eat a diet rich in calcium.

How much calcium is enough? The National Academy of Sciences recommends that children ages 2-3 get 500 milligrams (mg) of calcium daily, children ages 4-8 get 800 mg daily, and children and teens ages 9-18 get 1,300 mg daily from calcium-rich foods, such as milk, yogurt and cheese.

While the occasional glass of soda pop isn't going to harm an otherwise healthy teenager, it is a good idea to limit soda's availability. In addition to an increased risk of osteoporosis, excessive consumption of sugary soft drinks has been linked to obesity, Type 2 Diabetes and tooth decay.

The Effects of Alcohol on the Developing Brain

Alcohol can cause alterations in the structure and function of the developing brain, which continues to mature into a person's mid-20s, and it may have consequences reaching far beyond adolescence.

In adolescence, brain development is characterized by dramatic changes to the brain's structure, neuron connectivity (i.e., "wiring") and physiology. These changes in the brain affect everything from emerging sexuality to emotionality and judgment.



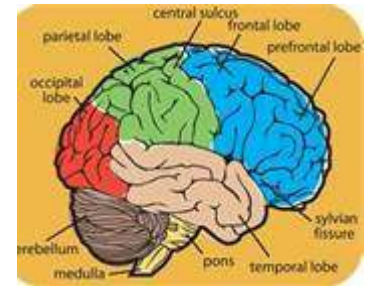
Not all parts of the adolescent brain mature at the same time, which may put an adolescent at a disadvantage in certain situations. For example, the limbic areas of the brain mature earlier than the frontal lobes. The limbic areas regulate emotions and are associated with an adolescent's lowered sensitivity to risk.

The frontal lobes are responsible for self-regulation, judgment, reasoning, problem-solving and impulse control. Differences in maturation among parts of the brain can result in impulsive decisions or actions and a disregard for consequences.

How Alcohol Affects the Brain

Alcohol affects an adolescent's brain development in many ways. The effects of underage drinking on specific brain activities are explained below.

Alcohol is a central nervous system depressant. Alcohol can appear to be a stimulant because, initially, it depresses the part of the brain that controls inhibitions.



Cerebral cortex - Alcohol slows down the cerebral cortex as it works with information from a person's senses.

Central nervous system - When a person thinks of something he wants his body to do, the central nervous system - the brain and the spinal cord - sends a signal to that part of the body. Alcohol slows down the central nervous system, making the person think, speak, and move slower.

Frontal lobes - The brain's frontal lobes are important for planning, forming ideas, making decisions, and using self-control. When alcohol affects the frontal lobes of the brain, a person may find it hard to control his or her emotions and urges. The person may act without thinking or may even become violent. Drinking alcohol over a long period of time can damage the frontal lobes forever.

Hippocampus - The hippocampus is the part of the brain where memories are made.

- When alcohol reaches the hippocampus, a person may have trouble remembering something he or she just learned, such as a name or a phone number. This can happen after just one or two drinks.
- Drinking a lot of alcohol quickly can cause a blackout - not being able to remember entire events, such as what he or she did last night.
- If alcohol damages the hippocampus, a person may find it hard to learn and to hold on to knowledge.

Cerebellum - The cerebellum is important for coordination, thoughts, and awareness. A person may have trouble with these skills when alcohol enters the cerebellum. After drinking alcohol, a person's hands may be so shaky that they can't touch or grab things normally, and they may lose their balance and fall.

Hypothalamus - The hypothalamus is a small part of the brain that does an amazing number of the body's housekeeping chores. Alcohol upsets the work of the hypothalamus. After a person drinks alcohol, blood pressure, hunger, thirst and the urge to urinate increase while body temperature and heart rate decrease.

Medulla - The medulla controls the body's automatic actions, such as a person's heartbeat. It also keeps the body at the right temperature. Alcohol actually chills the body. Drinking a lot of alcohol outdoors in cold weather can cause a person's body temperature to fall below normal. This dangerous condition is called hypothermia.

How to Avoid Teenage Pregnancies: 10 Tips for Parents

As a parent, you want what's best for your children. And you know – maybe from personal experience or friends – that an unplanned pregnancy can derail plans for schooling and a career. Here's what you can do to help your children avoid an unplanned pregnancy...



There is much that parents and adults can do to reduce the risk of teen pregnancy.

Many of these ideas presented here will seem familiar because they articulate what parents already know from experience — like the importance of maintaining strong, close relationships with children and teens, setting clear expectations for them and communicating honestly and often with them about important matters. Research supports these common sense ideas. The National Campaign to

Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy offers these tips to increase the ability of parents to help their children pass safely into adulthood pregnancy-free.

Be Clear About Your Own Sexual Values and Attitudes

Communicating with your children about sex, love and relationships is often more successful when you are clear in your own mind about these issues. To help clarify your own attitudes and values, think about the following kinds of questions.

- What do you really think about school-aged teenagers being sexually active — perhaps even becoming parents? Is abstinence best for teens?
- Who is responsible for setting limits in a relationship and how is that done, realistically?
- Were you sexually active as a teenager and how do you feel about that now? Were you sexually active before you were married? What do such reflections lead you to say to your own children about these issues?
- What do you think about teens using contraception?

Talk with your Children Early and Often about Sex, and be Specific

- Young people have lots of questions about sex, love and relationships. And they often say that the source they'd most like to go for answers is their parents. Start the conversation, and make sure that it is honest, open and respectful.

- If you can't think of how to start the discussion, consider using situations shown on TV or in the movies as conversation starters.
- Tell teens candidly and confidently what you think and why you believe what you do. If you're not sure about some issues, tell them about that, too.
- Be sure to have a two-way conversation, not a one-way lecture. Ask them what they think and what they know so you can correct misconceptions. Ask what, if anything, worries them.
- Age-appropriate conversations about relationships and intimacy should begin early in a child's life and continue through adolescence. Resist the idea that there should be just one conversation about all this — you know, "the talk." Think 18-year conversation.
- The truth is that parents and kids should be talking about sex and love all along. This applies to both sons and daughters and mothers and fathers.
- All teens need large amounts of communication, guidance and information about these issues, even if they sometimes don't appear to be interested in what you have to say. And if you have regular conversations, you won't worry so much about making a mistake, because you'll always be able to talk again.
- Many inexpensive books and videos are available to help with any detailed information you might need, but don't let your lack of technical information make you shy. Kids need as much help in understanding the meaning of sex as they do in understanding how all the body parts work. Tell them about love and sex, and what the difference is.
- And remember to talk about the reasons that kids find sex interesting and enticing; discussing only the "downside" of unplanned pregnancy and disease misses many of the issues on teenagers' minds.

Supervise and Monitor Your Children and Adolescents

Establish rules, curfews and standards of expected behavior, preferably through an open process of family discussion and respectful communication. If your children get out of school at 3 p.m. and you don't get home from work until 6 p.m., who is responsible for making certain that your children are not only safe, but also are engaged in useful activities? Where are they when they go out with friends? Are there adults around who are in charge? Supervising and monitoring your kids' whereabouts doesn't make you a nag; it makes you a parent.

Know your Children's Friends and Their Families

- Friends have a strong influence on one another, so help your children and teenagers become friends with kids whose families share your values. Some parents of teens even arrange to meet with the parents of their children's friends to establish common rules and expectations.
- It is easier to enforce a curfew that all your child's friends share rather than one that makes him or her different — but even if your views don't match those of other parents, hold fast to your convictions. Welcome your children's friends into your home and talk to them warmly and openly.

Discourage Early, Frequent and Steady Dating

- Group activities among young people are fine and often fun, but allowing teens to begin one-on-one dating much before age 16 can lead to trouble.
- Let your child know about your strong preference about this throughout childhood — don't wait until your young teen proposes a plan that differs from your preferences in this area; otherwise, he or she will think you just don't like the particular person or invitation.

Take a Strong Stand Against your Daughter Dating a Boy Significantly Older than she is

- And don't allow your son to develop an intense relationship with a girl much younger than he is. Older guys can seem glamorous to a young girl but the risk of matters getting out of hand increases when the guy is much older than the girl. Try setting a limit of no more than a two- (or at most three) -year age difference.
- The power differences between older boys or men and younger girls can lead girls into risky situations, including unwanted sex and sex with no protection.

Help your Teenagers to have Options for the Future that are more attractive than Early Pregnancy and Parenthood

- The chances that your son or daughter will delay having sex; pregnancy and parenthood are significantly increased if their future appears bright. This means helping them set meaningful goals for the future, talking to them about what it takes to make future plans come true and helping them reach their goals.
- Tell them, for example, that if they want to be a teacher, they will need to stay in school to earn various degrees and pass certain exams.
- It also means teaching them to use free time in a constructive way, such as setting aside certain times to complete homework assignments.
- Explain how becoming pregnant — or causing pregnancy — can derail the best of plans; for example, child-care expenses might make it almost impossible to afford college.
- Community service, in particular, can not only teach job skills, but can also put teens in touch with a wide variety of committed and caring adults.

Let your Kids know that you Value Education Highly

- Encourage your child to take school seriously and set high expectations about their school performance. School failure is often the first sign of trouble and can end in teenage parenthood. Be very attentive to your child's progress in school and intervene early if things aren't going well. Keep track of your children's grades in school and discuss them together. Meet with teachers and principals, guidance counselors and coaches.
- Limit the number of hours your teenagers gives to part-time jobs (20 hours a week should be the maximum) so they have enough time and energy to focus on school.

- Know about homework assignments and support your child in getting them done.
- Volunteer at the school, if possible. Schools want more parental involvement and will often try to accommodate your work schedule, if asked.

Know what your Kids are Watching, Reading and Listening to

- The media (television, radio, movies, music videos, magazines, the Internet) are full of material sending the wrong messages. Sex rarely has meaning, unplanned pregnancy seldom happens, and no one who is having sex ever seems to be married or even especially committed to anyone. Is this consistent with your expectations and values? If not, it is important to talk with your children about what the media portray and what you think about it.
- If certain programs or movies offend you, say so, and explain why.
- Be media literate— think about what you and your family are watching and reading. Encourage your kids to think critically: ask them what they think about the programs they watch and the music they listen to.
- You can always turn the TV off, cancel subscriptions and place certain movies off limits. You will probably not be able to fully control what your children see and hear, but you can certainly make your views known and control your own home environment.

These First Nine Tips for helping your Children Avoid Teenage Pregnancies Work Best When they occur as part of a Strong, Close Relationship with your Children that is Built from an Early Age

Strive for a relationship that is warm in tone, firm in discipline, rich in communication and one that emphasizes mutual trust and respect. There is no single way to create such relationships, but the following habits of the heart can help:

- Express love and affection clearly and often. Hug your children, and tell them how much they mean to you. Praise specific accomplishments, but remember that expressions of warmth and love should be offered freely, not just for a particular achievement.
- Listen carefully to what your children say and pay thoughtful attention to what they do.
- Spend time with your child engaged in activities that suit his age and interests, not just yours. Shared experiences build a “bank account” of affection and trust that forms the basis for future communication with him about specific topics, including sexual behavior.
- Be supportive and be interested in what interests them. Attend her sports events; learn about his hobbies; be enthusiastic about her achievements, even the little ones; ask them questions that show you care and want to know what is going on in their lives.
- Be courteous and respectful to your children and avoid hurtful teasing or ridicule. Don’t compare your teenager with other family members (i.e., why can’t you be like your older sister?). Show that you expect courtesy and respect from them in return.
- Help them to build self-esteem by mastering skills; remember, self-esteem is earned, not given, and one of the best ways to earn it is by doing something well.

- Try to have meals together as a family as often as possible, using the time for conversation, not confrontation.

A final note: it's never too late to improve a relationship with a child or teenager. Don't underestimate the great need that children feel — at all ages — for a warm relationship with their parents and for their parents' guidance, approval and support.

**CERTIFIED WOMEN'S HEALTH COUNSELOR ONLINE COURSE - SESSION 11
QUESTION & ANSWERS**

NAME: _____
ADDRESS: _____
CITY, STATE, ZIP, PC: _____
PHONE: _____
FAX: _____
E-MAIL: _____

Please be sure to fill out the information above, complete the test and e-mail or mail it back to us at iridology@netzero.net or P.O. Box 485, Weimar, CA, 95736-0485. We will grade your question & answer session and will let you know if we have any questions or concerns. **Please use a separate sheet to do this assignment.**

1. On average, girls should consume 2,000 to 3,000 calories a day. T/F
2. The vitamins that teens tend to be most deficient in are?
3. One nutrient that teenagers tend to not be deficient in is?
4. What are some things that you can do to ensure that your teen gets in the habit of eating right?
5. Puberty usually starts between the ages of?
6. What are the 10 best ways to prevent acne?
7. What is teenage depression?
8. What are the 10 ways to discourage teenage drinking?
9. Why do teenagers decide to start smoking?
10. What is sleep deprivation and how much sleep should a teen be getting?
11. Eating fast foods has been linked to which health issues?
12. Why should kids limit their intake of sodas and sugary drinks?
13. What are the 11 mistakes parents make with teen discipline?
14. What are the signs of teenage depression?
15. What are the 3 tips to raising teenagers?
16. What are the 10 tips to avoiding teenage pregnancy?