Well Check: Teen *(for Parents)*

Being with friends is important at this age. Your teenager is likely to choose to be with friends over you. Allow your teenager to be more independent and have more responsibility for decisions. Get to know their friends and find small ways to keep the family connected.

Stay focused on everyday health

- **Keep healthy foods at home**. Don't have junk food in the house. Make sure your teen knows how to make a few simple, healthy snacks and meals. If you're uncomfortable about your teen's weight or eating habits, ask your doctor for advice.
- **Encourage lots of physical activity.** Your child should be active for at least an hour a day. Don't allow more than 2 hours a day in front of screens (unless it's for homework).
- **Be sure to visit the dentist** twice a year. Make sure the brushing and flossing happens every day.
- **Talk about healthy sexuality.** Teenagers need correct information about both physical and emotional issues related to sex. Help your teen resist pressure to have sex at this age.
- **Praise your teen for *doing something* good,** not only for *looking* good.

Support independence — and safety

- **Be clear about rules and expectations.** Agree together on limits, curfews, responsibilities, and consequences. Stick to what you agreed on.
- **Talk about safety** in cars, during sports, with people, and in various situations. Help your teen learn to take responsibility for safety gear, safe situations, and safe behavior.
- **Consider locking your liquor and prescription medications in a cabinet.** Even if your teen is not tempted, friends may be.

Your family may need other resources to help keep your teenager healthy, safe, and happy. Write the numbers of other places you can get help:

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- **Encourage your teen to think through difficult decisions.** Don't try to provide all the answers.
- **Involve your child in decisions that affect the family,** as appropriate.

Keep the family close

- **Spend time doing things together as a family.** Even though your teen may want to spend more time with friends, it's still important to have fun and be active with the family.
- **Eat together as a family often.** Turn off the screens while you're eating. Use meal time as a way to talk and connect with each other.
- **Show affection.** Your teenager still needs lots of love and praise from you.
- **Be a role model.** Be an example of the healthy behaviors you want to see in your teenager.
- **Talk about your values.** Peer values don't replace parents. Talk about drugs, alcohol, and sex. Explain how you feel about them.

Stay aware of friends and activities

- **Get to know your teen's friends**. Always be aware of where he is and what he's doing.
- **Make sure your teen knows how to get help when feeling unsafe.** Agree on other trusted adults he can turn to if you're not available, or if he has something he's uncomfortable sharing with you.
- **Encourage relationships built on respect,** whether they're with boys or girls. Talk about honesty, kindness, and open communication.

Understand moodiness

- **Help talk through stresses and problems.** It's normal to be moody at this age. Talk about good ways to handle sadness, disagreements, or anger.
- **If your teen seems overly sad,** anxious, or irritable, talk with the doctor for advice.

HELPFUL RESOURCES

If you need help in other areas of your life (such as rent, violence, or a job), call 2-1-1, or visit 211ut.org for community resources.

Stay aware of what's happening at school

- **School can be challenging at this age.** Some students may have a harder time, and some may resist school. Talk with your teenager about these challenges.
- **School is a good place to show independence.** Encourage your teen to take responsibility for her learning, due dates, and time management.
- **Keep in touch with teachers and counselors.** Go to parent conferences and back-to-school night. Be involved with the school.
- **Help your teen find activities she likes to do outside of schoolwork,** such as sports, the arts, volunteer work, or causes in the community. This is a good way to make friends and build a sense of self.

Everybody's a little different. Your doctor may tell you some things that are different from what this paper says. If so, follow what your doctor says.

NOTES:

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Your next well check will be in one year.

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