



Parenting

The natural changes your teen goes through during adolescence can be hard for both you and your teen. Your love and guidance during this time can help your teen make good choices.

Here are some helpful approaches to parenting during the teen years:

- It's normal for teens to want more independence. Recognize that your teen may be less willing to be involved in some family activities and may start to challenge your authority.
- Respect your teen's need for privacy. Be open with your teen if you have safety concerns.
- Be flexible. Allow your teen to test, explore, and communicate within limits, but stay firm and consistent.
- Establish realistic family rules, giving your teen more responsibility as he or she seems ready. Set clear limits and consequences if rules are broken.
- Help build your teen's confidence by paying attention. When he or she wants

to talk, try to stop what you're doing and really listen.

- Along with your teen, decide which activities are okay to do on his or her own, such as going out with friends who drive.
- Spend personal, fun time with your teen. Try to keep a sense of humor and praise positive behavior.
- If you're having trouble getting along with your teen, try talking with other parents who also have teenagers or with a counselor.

Safety

Accidents, such as alcohol-related car accidents, are a major killer of teens. Parents can help prevent accidents by giving clear and consistent messages, as well as enforcing basic safety rules. Try to set a good example. Your teen looks to you as a role model.

- Help your teen stay safe while driving.
 1. Wear your seat belt.
 2. Do not use your cell phone to talk or text.
 3. Do not drink and drive.
- It's safest not to have a gun in the house. If you do own a gun, always unload it and lock it up.
- Make sure your teen wears protective pads and a properly fitting helmet when riding a bike or scooter, when skateboarding or rollerblading and for any contact sports.
- Talk with your teen about the dangers of using alcohol and drugs, including prescription medications. Do not allow underage drinking in your home. Keep alcohol and prescription drugs out of reach. Teens who drink or use drugs are more likely to take dangerous risks.

Healthy eating and exercise

You can help your child have a healthy weight and do his or her best in school by

serving nutritious meals and encouraging regular physical activity.

- Your teen needs 60 minutes of exercise each day to be healthy.
- Make family meal time a priority. Teens who eat with their families 5 times a week or more eat better and have fewer behavior problems.
- Serve fruits and vegetables your teen likes. They should cover half your teen's plate.
- Limit soda, sports drinks, juice, and sweetened drinks. One can has as much sugar and calories as a candy bar.
- Limit screen time (TV, computers, and video games) to 1 to 2 hours a day.
- To help your teen get enough calcium, offer nonfat or low-fat dairy products (milk, yogurt, cheese). Aim for four cups each day. Tums or calcium chews are other options.
- Most teens don't get enough Vitamin D and should take daily supplements: 1,000 to 2,000 IU of Vitamin D3. Teen girls should also take a daily multivitamin with folic acid and iron.

Talking about sexuality

Talk with your teen about sexuality, relationships, and responsibility. Share your views about sex, and discuss the potential emotional and physical consequences (such as pregnancy, STDs, and guilt).

1. **Start talking early.** This will make it less awkward each time.
2. **Start the conversations.** Even if it feels difficult or awkward, your teen may be interested, but too embarrassed to ask.
3. **Let your teen know** that you are always available to talk.
4. **Communicate your values.** Discuss your beliefs so your teen can use your values to develop his or her own set of beliefs.

5. Listen carefully and try not to judge.

This will reduce confusion and help you understand what's truly on your teen's mind.

6. Keep talking. Teens who have accurate information and know that they can go to a parent with questions or concerns may be less likely to participate in risky behaviors.

Even before your teen becomes sexually active, it's a good idea to:

- Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of abstinence, condom use, and birth control.
- Talk about the possibility of unwanted pregnancy. If your teen has had unprotected sex, one option is emergency contraceptive pills (ECPs). ECPs can prevent pregnancy if birth control wasn't used; however, ECPs are most useful if started within 72 hours after having sex.
- Inform your teen about Chlamydia, a common sexually transmitted disease (STD) that can cause infertility if left undetected. Chlamydia screening is recommended for all sexually active young women every year.

School

School is a major part of your teen's life. It's important for parents to stay involved.

- Tell your teen why you think education is important.
- Show interest in your teen's school life and pay attention to grades and attendance problems.
- If there are problems, work with the school staff and your teen to find out what's wrong.
- Encourage your teen to join at least one school activity (such as playing sports or acting in a theater group).

It can help your teen feel connected.

- If your teen is having difficulty, arrange for tutoring or extra help.

- Start talking about your teen's future. Discuss how a college education can open up opportunities.
- Help your teen learn to manage time and stress, and encourage 8 to 9 hours of sleep on most nights.

Well care and immunizations

Help your teen schedule a well care visit every one to two years. Keep up with all recommended immunizations:

- ❑ **Flu:** Everyone in your family needs a seasonal flu vaccine every year.
- ❑ **Tdap:** All students entering 7th grade need proof of a Tdap booster shot, which protects against whooping cough.
- ❑ **HPV:** 3 doses are recommended for all pre-teens ages 11 to 12. (If your older teen missed the vaccine, ask about getting it now).
- ❑ **Meningococcal:** Pre-teens should receive a single shot at age 11 to 12 and may need a booster dose between ages 16 and 18.

Confidential care and privacy

It is important that teens have time alone with their doctor or nurse practitioner (NP) to discuss sensitive issues. Once your child turns 12, we will want to see your teen privately during all or part of the appointment. Teens – like most adults – have an easier time sharing personal information with their medical professional in private.

In most cases, your teen needs your permission before seeing a doctor or NP. However, according to California law, when your child is at least 12 years old, he or she can see a medical provider without a parent's permission for these confidential concerns:

- Pregnancy/birth control
- STD prevention or treatment
- Alcohol or drug use
- Personal, school, or family issues

These are serious issues, so we always encourage teens to talk with parents or another trusted adult.

Stay connected to your teen's doctors

We still want to talk with you about your questions and concerns, since you know your teen best. Please let the medical assistant or nurse know if you have any specific concerns that you wish to discuss with your child's doctor or NP during the office visit.

If you haven't already, please register for kp.org and set up access to "Act for a Family Member." You will be able to e-mail your teen's doctor, schedule appointments, refill prescriptions, and view and print immunization records. Together, we can work to keep your teen healthy.

More resources

Sign up to receive our *Healthy Teens* online newsletters. Get trusted information from Kaiser Permanente doctors on raising healthy teens delivered right to your inbox. Visit kp.org/mydoctor to subscribe today.

Websites

- Kaiser Permanente: kp.org/mydoctor
- Kids Health College Page kidshealth.org/teen/index.html
- American Academy of Pediatrics: Healthychildren.org

Books

- *Teenage Body Book*. McCoy and Wibblesman.
- *How to Talk So Kids Will Listen*. Faber and Mazlish

Contact your local Health Education Department or Center for information, classes and more resources.

This information is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of medical advice or care you receive from your physician or other health care professional. If you have persistent health problems, or if you have additional questions, please consult with your doctor. Kaiser Permanente does not endorse the medications or products mentioned. Any trade names listed are for easy identification only.