

Your 12- to 14-Year-Old Child

Diet

- Offer a variety of healthy foods, and try to eat together as a family. Make time for breakfast; encourage fruits, vegetables and whole grains. Have your child help in the kitchen.
- As much as possible, limit fast foods, junk foods, soda and sweets. Caffeine intake should be minimal, and energy drinks should be completely avoided.
- The teenage years are crucial for building bone strength. Encourage exercise and calcium intake. Try for 16–20 ounces per day of low-fat milk, or substitute other calcium containing foods (yogurt, cheese, soy or almond milk, tofu, kale, broccoli). Calcium supplementation is also an option.
- Multivitamins may be recommended if your teen's diet seems consistently inadequate.
- Discuss concerns about your child's weight with your provider. If you observe any preoccupation with weight or food choices, please let us know. If you wish to discuss this (or any other) issue without your child in the room, please call.

Development

- Try to foster the habit of regular exercise. An hour each day is a good goal (not necessarily all at once). Exercising as a family is a way to set a good example.
- Peer relationships and acceptance in a peer group become increasingly important. Your (pre)teen may need some guidance handling peer pressure.
- Signs of puberty may have already appeared. Talk to your teen about body changes and use correct terminology. Answer questions about sex and physical or emotional feelings in an honest, matter-of-fact way.
- Your (pre)teen may wonder "Am I normal?" and think "No one understands." Let them know in words and actions that you care and have had similar feelings.
- Girls who have started menstruating should track their cycles on a calendar or smartphone app. Irregularity is normal at this age.

Safety

- Your child should sit in the back seat (always using a seat belt) until age 13 years. Make a point of wearing your own seat belt, and don't text while driving.
- Have your child use sunscreen with SPF 30 or greater. Avoid tanning salons.
- If your child is a non-swimmer, enroll him in swimming lessons and make sure he learns about diving safety. Knowing how to swim does not ensure "drown-proofing" for children of any age; supervision is still necessary. Make sure your child always wears a life jacket when on a boat.
- Whenever your child is on wheels (bike, skateboard or rollerblades), he should wear a properly fitted bicycle helmet and protective gear. Teach the "rules of the road" when on foot, in a car or on a bicycle.
- Discuss avoidance of tobacco, alcohol, drugs (including inhalants and diet pills) and guns. Keep an open line of communication; ask about friends.
- If you own a gun, store it unloaded and locked, in a separate location from ammunition (which should also be locked).

General Parental Guidelines

- Rules and expectations should be discussed, clarified, and enforced. Parents who provide unconditional love along with consistent boundaries tend to build strong and durable family ties. This has been shown to reduce risky behavior in middle and late adolescence.
- Limit the amount of TV and monitor the types of shows your child watches. Avoid violent video games. Set reasonable rules and guidelines for TV and computer use.
- Develop a pattern of communication with your child and support him as an independent person. Try to find time every day to talk (mealtime, in the car, at school pickup) about a variety of topics.

(continued)

- The computer should be in a location that allows you to monitor your child’s internet activity (not in your child’s bedroom). Teach your child to never give out identifying information online. Get to know the services and websites that your child uses. Instruct your child to tell you about any online interactions that are suggestive, obscene, threatening or make your child feel uncomfortable.
- Try to avoid too many activities; children and parents need down time. Continue to expect your child to help with household chores.

Fever/Illness

- Fever is a common symptom in children, usually caused by the immune system’s response to an infection. Any temperature over 100.4° F is considered a fever. Once you’ve identified a fever, you can treat it with acetaminophen or ibuprofen to make your child more comfortable. Depending on other symptoms, it may be necessary to come to the office, although most fevers are caused by viruses, and can be managed at home.
- More important than the number on the thermometer is how your child looks and acts. If your child is interactive after receiving fever medicine, that is a good sign.
- Please call our office to report fever that lasts more than 72 hours, or is accompanied by other concerning symptoms (decreased drinking, decreased urine output, labored breathing, or looking very ill).
- Being prepared can help you cope with fever. Keep your thermometer handy, have acetaminophen or ibuprofen (and dosing information) available, and take these with you when travelling.

Prevention

- Schedule dental visits every six months, and make sure your child is brushing and flossing.
- A good resource for information about vaccines is vaccine.chop.edu/parents.
- A useful website for reliable information about a wide variety of pediatric health topics is healthychildren.org.

Today and at each yearly check-up

- Your (pre)teen will have a physical examination and have a chance to ask confidential questions. Your questions and concerns will be answered. Your (pre)teen may be taught how to perform a breast or testicular self exam.
- Your (pre)teen may need a tuberculosis skin test, a Human Papilloma virus vaccine (HPV, or Gardasil) and possibly other catch-up vaccines.

Acetaminophen Dosing Instructions

Every 4–6 hours and no more than 5 doses per day

Weight	Dose	Liquid	Chews	Tablets
60–71 lbs	400 mg	2½ tsp	2½ x 160 mg	—
72–95 lbs	480 mg	3 tsp	3 x 160 mg	1 x 325 mg
96–119 lbs	650 mg	—	4 x 160 mg	2 x 325 mg

Ibuprofen Dosing Instructions

Every 6–8 hours and no more than 3 doses per day

Weight	Dose	Liquid	Chews	Tablets
60–71 lbs	250 mg	2½ tsp	2½ x 100 mg	1 x 200 mg
72–95 lbs	300 mg	3 tsp	3 x 100 mg	1 x 200 mg
96–119 lbs	400 mg	—	4 x 100 mg	2 x 200 mg