



What to Expect as Your Child Grows: Well Child Care at 13-14 Years

Nutrition

- Nutrition is very important for children at this age. They are growing rapidly and growing more independent.
- Teenagers eat many meals outside the house. Encourage them to make healthy choices.
- Purchase plenty of fruits, vegetables, calcium-rich foods, and iron-rich foods (especially meats, nuts, soy, and iron-enriched cereals).
- The best way to get your teenager to eat well is to be a good role model. Encourage family meals and have open ended conversations about making good food choices. This is one way to make sure teens are consuming a nourishing diet.

Development

- Most girls and some boys are well into the rapid physical growth of adolescence. Expect growth spurts. Ask your healthcare provider if you have specific questions about your children's physical and emotional changes as they mature.
- School achievement is very important at this age. Many experience anxiety due to increased social and academic stressors. Stay involved with your child's schoolwork and be a cheerleader- rewarding efforts and achievements with praise.
- Your child may struggle with a sense of identity. The need to fit in becomes more important. Talk with your child about peer pressure. Watch for signs of changes in your child's normal behaviors that go against the family's value system. Your child may be influenced by friends to try risky behaviors (alcohol, tobacco, sex).
- Encourage open communication regarding sexuality with your adolescent. Teens may start to look for loving relationships outside of the family.

Behavior and Discipline

- At this age, peer pressure can be hard to resist. To prevent problems, get to know your child's friends and their parents. Children who are most successful at resisting negative peer pressure are those with a strong self-concept who have the confidence to say "No."
- Your child may be opinionated and challenge family rules and values.
- You should continue to set limits and enforce consequences. Your child may feel that you are preventing him from doing things independently. This can help your child avoid errors in judgment that could have lifelong repercussions.

Safety Tips

- Accidents are the number one cause of death in adolescent children.
- Kids like to take risks at this age but are not well prepared to judge the degree of those risks.
- Everyone in a car should always wear a seat belt.
- Make sure your child always uses a bicycle helmet. You can set a good example by always wearing a helmet.
- Remind your child about riding on busy streets.
- If you have a gun at home, make sure it is locked up.

Smoking, E-Cigarettes & Vaping

- Most adult smokers started smoking as teens. Children at this age may begin smoking by trying to fit in with friends. They may be curious about what it is like or do it as a way to rebel against their parents. Pre-teens and teens are not often concerned with future health problems. It may be more helpful to emphasize the negatives that your child can see and feel now:
- Cigarettes do not smell good. The smell will get into your child's clothes, room, hair, and breath.
- Your child will be forced to smoke outside (even when it is cold) away from other people. Your child may not be able to participate in certain events because she smokes.
- If you smoke as a parent, set a quit date and stop. Set a good example for your child. If you cannot quit, do NOT smoke in the house or near children.
- Vaping may seem like a good alternative to cigarettes. However, the long term health effects are still unknown.
- E-Cigs come in different shapes. Some are made to look like a pen, a memory stick, key fob and even an inhaler.

Immunizations

- Gardasil (human papillomavirus vaccine) is recommended for children eleven- to twelve-year-olds. This is a vaccine that protects against sexually transmitted warts and cervical cancer. We routinely give it at the 13-14 year visit. The vaccine is given in a two-dose series if given before the age of 15. Ask your healthcare provider for more information about HPV vaccine.
- Children over six months of age should receive an annual flu shot.

Next Visit

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that your child have a routine check-up every year.