



# What to Expect as Your Child Grows: Well Child Care at 17-18 Years

## Nutrition

- Encourage consumption of healthy foods and beverages. Avoid high calorie foods/snacks and high calorie beverages.
- Teenagers should consume roughly 1300mg of calcium per day. Calcium rich foods include dairy products, green, leafy vegetables, and calcium fortified juices.
- Watch for unusual eating patterns, food refusal, preoccupation with weight or calories.
- Calorie needs will vary based on age and physical activity: females 1800 to 2400 and males 2200 to 3200.

## Development

- Most girls have completed the physical changes related to puberty by age 15.
- Boys are still maturing and gaining strength, muscle mass, and height and are completing the development of sexual traits.
- This may be a vulnerable time for teens with school stresses and pressure to perform. Make sure your expectations and your child's expectations are realistic.
- Most adolescents will move toward developing individual values versus peer group values.
- Most adolescents move from dependence to independence with more appreciation of family.

## Behavior and Discipline

- Your child may experiment with risky behaviors but with a greater awareness of these behaviors. They may or may not change the behaviors.
- Set expectations for behaviors with your teenager in advance with discussion about the consequences for violating set expectations.
- 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

Motor vehicle accidents are the number one cause of death in children between the ages of sixteen and twenty.

Driving rules to consider:

- No eating or drinking while driving.
- No talking on the cell phone or texting.
- Wear a seat belt at all times.
- Never get in a car with someone who has been drinking.
- Limit the number of people that are allowed in the car. Studies show the more occupants in a car with a teen driver the greater the likelihood of accidents.

## Smoking

- 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. They may think it will help them relax. They may 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.
  - Cigarettes cost a lot of money. An average smoker spends at least \$2500 a year on cigarettes. Your child can probably think of many other ways to spend her money.
- 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.

## Sexual Activity

- Sexual drive emerges and develops: dating, sexual experimentation, intercourse.
- Teens develop and establish sexuality with more intimate, committed partner relationships.
- Encourage open communication regarding sexuality with your adolescent.
- Encourage abstinence as the best and safest form of birth control and prevention of sexually transmitted infections.
- If sexually active, encourage open discussions of birth control methods (oral contraceptives, condoms) and discussion of sexually transmitted infection prevention.
- It's important for parents to realize that surveys show up to 50% of teenagers report having sex at least once by the end of their high school years. Continue to keep lines of communication open and continue to build trust with your teens or encourage teenagers to talk with a trusted adult about their sexual activity.

## What to Expect at This Visit

- Your child may be up to date on immunizations. If your child is preparing to enter college, it will be important to check with the school for the list of recommended vaccines for enrollment.
- If your child hasn't receive the Gardasil series (human papillomavirus vaccine), you may want to consider it now. This is a vaccine that protects against cervical cancer which is caused by HPV infections.
- An influenza vaccine is recommended for every person over six months of age.

## Next Visit

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