

Adolescence

(11-21 years)

For parents

Adolescence covers the wide age group from 11 to 21 years. The terms child, teen, adolescent, and young adult express a range of maturity. At age 11 some are still very much children, while others are already going through puberty, with its dramatic physical and hormonal growth. (Though physical changes are not likely to match emotional readiness.) Teens typically begin to make more independent decisions and explore new roles for themselves. Relationships with friends increase in importance. The challenge to parents is to promote independence while still offering guidance and support - even if teens do not always think they need it. The challenge to teens is to launch themselves into the future, to become independent adults, while still maintaining ties to families. There are many right ways to raise healthy children to adulthood!





Thinking Ahead: Promoting Confidence

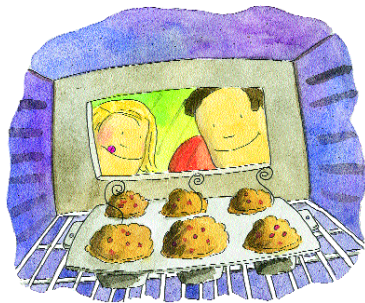


Branching Out

- ☼ Encourage your teen to take on new challenges to gain self confidence. Listen to what interests him, and think about how he can become involved in activities that will stimulate new skills. Help your teen learn about his strengths.
- ☼ Encourage your teen to participate in social activities, community groups, and team sports. The sense of belonging that comes from being part of a group can be very important.

Family Ties

- ☼ Spend time with your teen and the rest of the family doing things you all enjoy. Expect some changes in behavior during adolescence. Teens will want to spend more time with friends, but encourage them to stay involved in activities with the family also.
- ☼ Respect your teenager's need for privacy.
- ☼ Clarify family rules and establish reasonable consequences for unacceptable behavior. Important family rules should be reinforced. Listen to your teen. If she feels too old for some of these rules, talk together about why you have them and how they might be modified.



Building Confidence

- ✿ Praise and recognize positive behavior and achievements. Your teen's self esteem is especially important during this time when so much change is occurring.
- ✿ Help your teen develop ways to handle peer pressure.
- ✿ Acknowledge that he might want to talk about fears or worries.
- ✿ Encourage your teen to make independent decisions and understand the consequences of actions: to make decisions about school and classes; to try out part-time jobs; to find new friends or activities.





Thinking Ahead: Promoting Responsibility



- ✿ Provide clear guidance and set reasonable, challenging expectations. Remind your teen that people expect more from her as she gets older.
- ✿ Keep the lines of communication open. Listen to his views of the world - even if you have to do it late at night, in the car, or while watching TV.
- ✿ As teens learn to take on more responsibility, look for signs that they can make good decisions and learn from mistakes.
- ✿ Expect teens to continue to share household chores.
- ✿ Acknowledge teens as role models for their brothers, sisters and friends. Offer constructive criticism and comment positively on their actions.
- ✿ Encourage teens to develop their own relationship with their health care providers. Help them feel comfortable about any of their concerns.
- ✿ Tell them their privacy at health visits is protected. They should discuss privacy concerns with their health care provider.

