



Thinking Ahead: Encouraging Success in School

- ❖ Ask your teen about classes, teachers, and school activities. Let her know how important you think school is. Continue to offer advice about classes and activities you think would be worthwhile, but also listen to her opinions. Final decisions should be hers.
- ❖ Your teenager should take responsibility for his own school attendance, homework, course selection, and after-school activities. As he learns to do this, you can help him develop positive habits for studying and managing time, with time for school work, part-time job, activities, and hanging out with friends.
- ❖ Encourage your teen to talk to you or another trusted adult about school issues. Moving to middle school or high school is an anxious time for many teens. Discussing these issues can often help your teen come up with ways to deal with problems.
- ❖ Help your teenager identify her own talents and interests and think about how to pursue these. Discuss her future goals: college, technical training, military, or other career choices. Help her think about what would be best for her, and how to achieve it.





Thinking Ahead: Healthy Habits



Health and Development

- ✿ Try to help your teen set up a regular sleep schedule.
- ✿ Encourage your teen to exercise - three times a week is recommended. Keep in mind that weight loss and gain may become issues. Try to understand your adolescent's view of weight, and get her help if you feel she is gaining or losing too much.
- ✿ Swimming is a basic enjoyment, exercise, and safety skill. Seek out programs with other teens or adults if your teen is still learning to swim.
- ✿ Teens may need to be reminded that sunscreen is an essential protection when outdoors, no matter what color skin they have. Remind them to avoid tanning salons. Alert them to the risks later in life from early sun damage.
- ✿ Talk with your teen about good mental health habits: how to handle stress and emotions such as anger, sadness and disappointment. Encourage discussion of feelings with family and friends. Support your teen to seek professional help, if needed.
- ✿ Alcohol, tobacco, drugs, diet pills and steroids tempt many teens. Talk about how they damage the body and how to avoid places and situations where they are available. Discuss peer pressure and ways to say no. Look for signs that your teen has used any of these substances and talk about your concern. If needed, take action to find a program that will help your teen stop their use.



- ❁ Talk to your teen or help him identify a supportive adult when he has questions about sexuality. Not all teens are sexually active, but most will be thinking about it. Teens need accurate information including information about abstinence (delaying sex before marriage). Some will need information on safe sex and family planning (birth control).
- ❁ Remind your teen about family rules when using the computer (time on the computer, giving out personal information to strangers, joining chat rooms and surfing the net). See page 98 for tips.
- ❁ Remind teens to avoid high noise levels especially when using headphones.
- ❁ Adolescence is a time when many teens are eager to learn how to drive. It's important that parents play a role in helping their teen become a safe and responsible driver and passenger. See page 100 for tips. It's a good idea to talk to your teen about car insurance plans and who will be responsible for payment.
- ❁ Talk about safety issues for home and elsewhere including smoke detectors, fire escape planning, and emergency situations. See page 80 for *Important phone numbers* - keep it in a handy place.
- ❁ Helmets and protective gear are important when riding, working, or playing sports, so reinforce all the messages from younger ages for the independent teen.



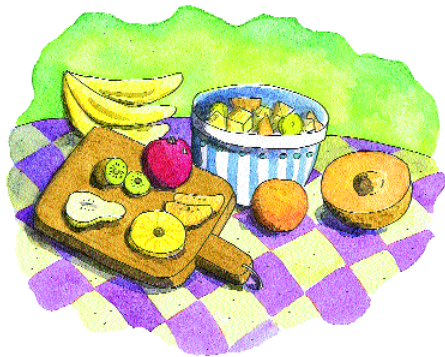


Food and Eating

- ✿ Continue regular patterns of eating together as a family.
- ✿ Always try to have healthy food available.
- ✿ Talk with your teen about eating healthy food and snacks. See page 97 for snack tips.
- ✿ Encourage your teen to help with meal planning, food shopping, and meal preparation.

Oral Health

- ✿ Keep routine dental appointments.
- ✿ Most teens are very aware of the importance of brushing and flossing twice a day. Reinforce this. Discuss the effects of smoking and chewing tobacco.
- ✿ As your teen's permanent molars and wisdom teeth erupt, be sure your dentist evaluates them. Ask any questions you have about dental sealants for permanent molars.
- ✿ Talk to your teen about how to handle dental emergencies, especially the loss or fracture of a tooth.





Thinking Ahead: Being Part of Your Community



- ❖ Check with friends, school or your local newspaper for interesting community activities. Your teen might like to do some on his own. Also encourage your teen to continue to join in activities the whole family enjoys.
- ❖ Talk about current events as a regular part of dinnertime or other family discussions. Discuss personal responsibility and roles your teen or family might take.
- ❖ Encourage your teen to learn about her cultural heritage. As teenagers develop their own identities, it can be very powerful and enriching for them to know more about their culture and those of their friends.
- ❖ Help your teen learn about community events and programs he might want to be involved with, individually or as a family.
- ❖ Consider community efforts that might interest or challenge her - as a volunteer or for pay:
 - addressing substance abuse problems
 - working for affordable housing
 - environmental clean up programs
- ❖ Advocate for local programs that meet the needs and interests of teenagers - recreational, sports, religious, musical, educational.





Thinking Ahead: Health Transitions for Young Adults

- ❖ Discuss changing to an adult health care provider if your young adult is being seen by a pediatric provider. Talk about preferences such as seeing a health care provider who is the same gender, race or ethnicity.
- ❖ Reevaluate your health insurance and other ways you pay for health care. Students who are in school or college are usually still eligible for coverage under their parents' health plans. Check with your health plan to see how coverage is handled for young adults after high school. Talk with others in your community, including your health care provider or health department, about other available resources.



- ❖ Talk with your young adult's health care provider about family issues, friends, or parenting resources and questions you have.
- ❖ Make health and dental care your young adult's responsibility. Help him establish his own relationship with his health care provider and dentist.