



Is Your Adolescent getting READY for Life? The Adolescent Health Supervision Visit

As your child becomes an adolescent, the hormonal shifts common during puberty result in emotional and physical changes. This transition can feel overwhelming; your teen's health care provider is one person who can guide you both through this journey. Yearly check-ups, also called health supervision or well care visits, are often overlooked but can provide you with the tools to successfully transition your teen through adolescence.

Is a Well Care Visit a Sports Physical?

Some schools require athletes to provide proof of a physical exam before participating in sports. This exam is simply intended to evaluate one's physical ability to safely participate in sports. Well care visits allow for a more thorough physical exam and health screen. They also provide the opportunity to address other important teen issues.

What happens during an adolescent's Well Care Visit?

The provider will review several areas of development and preventative health topics. The provider can measure BMI and give advice about nutrition and physical activity. Well care visits through middle and high school also provide a chance to review your teen's vaccine history and discuss other recommended vaccines. Screening tests may be recommended (vision and hearing screening, testing for anemia, or screening for hidden infections such as tuberculosis or chlamydia).

What about my adolescent's behavior and emotional health?

Teens are surrounded by confusing messages from the media and peers who may be making unhealthy choices. This visit allows your teen the chance to discuss sensitive topics and address problems early. Some of these topics may include drugs and alcohol, eating disorders, depression, anxiety, puberty, and sexuality. The majority of teen fatal and non-fatal accidents are preventable, and well care visits can provide guidance teens need to make good decisions and decrease their risks of injury.

What can I do to protect my adolescent from risky behavior?

Reinforcing strengths or assets can protect teens from risks and help them get READY for life. Your doctor may ask your teen about their strengths:

R for Relationships: Is your teen learning to form healthy relationships with peers, teachers, and coaches? Does he feel he belongs or fits in at school and in the community? Does he have at least one adult he can go to if he has a problem to discuss? What about romantic relationships?

E for Energy to get things done. Does your teen have enough energy to get school work done and have fun? If not, why not? Is there a health problem, not enough sleep, or could she be depressed?

A for Awareness of the world and how one fits in. Does your teen have opportunities to contribute in the family, at school, in the community? Is he developing a sense of honesty, kindness, empathy, and generosity?

D for Decision maker. Is your teen learning how to make healthy, independent decisions about her health and behavior choices? Can you help her be a better decision maker?

Y for saying Yes to healthy behaviors – Does your teen eat well, sleep well, work hard and play hard?

What about confidentiality and privacy during my adolescent's Well Care Visit?

Allowing your teen the space to freely discuss any health issues with the doctor ensures that important health issues will not be overlooked due to embarrassment, shame, or fear. This also helps create confidence in your teen's ability to handle their own healthcare as they transition into adulthood.