

Wellness Guide at 15-17 Years Old

Helpful tips to support your child's development at this stage of life.



Development

- **Mental Health:** At this age, teens are at the highest risk for [mental health problems](#). They are often faced with decisions regarding alcohol, vaping, drug use, sex, and other risky behaviors. Fighting, bullying, worsening academic or job performance, irritability, suicidal thoughts, and appearing overly anxious or sad may be signs of mood issues and substance use. Discuss ways to cope with stress.
- **Anxiety/Depression:** Anxiety or depression/mood issues may impact academic, behavioral and social functioning. Your pediatrician is available for consultation if you have concerns.
- **Influence:** Set positive examples and talk to your child about vaping, drugs, and alcohol. Parents should not underestimate their ability to positively influence opinions and decisions.
- **Peer Pressure:** Peers are an important source of information, and peer pressure can be positive or negative. Teach them that healthy relationships are built on respect and help them navigate friendships that are no longer mutually respectful.
- **Involvement:** Be involved in your teen's life by knowing where they are and who their friends are. Spend time together doing something you both enjoy. Let your teen know they are loved, appreciated, respected and that you have confidence in them.
- **Rules:** Let them practice independent decision-making skills by communicating to reach agreements about family rules, limits, and expectations. Include discussions about bedtime, homework, T.V., chores, cell phone, etc.
- **Lifestyle:** Parents can help by modeling healthy lifestyle behaviors and having open conversations with their teen.

DEVELOPMENTAL RESOURCES

TEEN HEALTH HUB WA

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

Safety

- Have a list of trusted adults you can call for help when faced with unsafe/uncomfortable situations.
- Driver's license: set expectations about the number of friends in the car and nighttime driving. Discuss avoiding multi-tasking and distractions while driving (cell phone, texting, reading). Discuss that it is important to never drink/smoke and drive or get into a vehicle with an impaired driver.
- Limit the volume on headphones, especially when walking to ensure cars can be heard.
- Use protective gear for sports.
- Concussions can occur when your teen has a head injury, collision, or fall. Symptoms vary and most teens do not lose consciousness. We can evaluate your teen for concerns and give advice on safe return to play. When in doubt, sit it out.

CONCUSSION & INJURY RESOURCES [↗](#)

- Encourage helmet and seat belt use.
- Remove/lock up guns. Lock away cigarettes, lighters, alcohol, marijuana, and vaping devices.
- Monitor medications to keep teens safe from leftover opioids and other prescription meds.

IMPORTANT RESOURCES

POISON CONTROL: (800) 222-1222

SUICIDE & CRISIS LIFELINE: 988

WA MENTAL HEALTH REFERRAL LINE:
(833) 303-5437

END OVERDOSE: FREE NALOXONE
TRAINING & TEST KITS

Overseas Travel

If your family will be traveling internationally, schedule a virtual eTravel consultation at least 4–6 weeks before departure to review travel health recommendations, vaccines, and medications.

TRAVEL CONSULTATION

Health

- Encourage calcium/Vitamin D (400 to 600 IU/day)/iron intake and balanced nutrition. Avoid sugar sweetened beverages and snacks.
- Make a dentist appointment.
- Use toothpaste with fluoride and encourage flossing.
- Encourage daily physical activity for the whole family. We recommend 60 minutes of exercise every day.
- A simple bedtime routine, proper sleep (8-10 hours), and daily breakfast allow your teen to reach their potential.

HEALTH RESOURCES

PHYSICAL FITNESS & SPORTS

CHRONIC CONDITION RESOURCES

Body Image

- Young teens typically demonstrate an enhanced sensitivity to appearance. Clothing, accessories, and hairstyles are often used as a way to fit in with peers and express themselves.
- Be conscious about how you talk about food and appearances, as concerns with body image, dieting and weight may arise. Find ways to show appreciation of their healthy choices and efforts.
- Try providing healthy foods at home and allowing your teen to participate in food shopping or meal preparation.
- Continue to try to eat healthy family meals together at home.

EATING DISORDER AWARENESS

FUELING THE TEENAGE YEARS

Puberty & Relationships

- Various cultures/religions differ in their approach to puberty/sexuality. Access to accurate and culturally appropriate information is essential for your teen.
- Encourage routine hygiene.
- Interpersonal relationships are evolving and experimentation can occur.
- Provide an opportunity for open communication. Talk to your teen about expectations, curfews, dating, and friendships.

School

- Academic struggles may be a sign of learning disabilities, attention deficits, stressors at home or school, substance use, or anxiety/depression. Consider discussing concerns with your teen's teacher/school or health care provider.
- Showing interest in their schoolwork and communicating with their teacher shows them you value their education and development.
- Encourage discussions about planning for college or potential career options.

ACADEMIC/BEHAVIORAL CONCERNS

Digital Media Plan & Safety

- Establish rules for internet and phone use. Visit the AAP website to create a [Family Media Plan](#). Discuss digital respect when posting on social media or texting. Bedtime and mealtime should be electronic-free zones.
- Multitasking with homework will result in work errors, longer to complete work, and mental fatigue from rapid task switching.
- Although internet/cell phones are often an essential social and recreational outlet, they may pose risks to privacy and personal safety. Do not give out personal information, share passwords, or physically meet someone you have only "met" on the internet.
- Make safe and respectful decisions about what you post/text/email.
- Do not text/email/share photos of anything you would not want forwarded to your parents. Remember that a sent text or photo cannot be "taken back". These decisions can affect your reputation, possibilities of future employment, and college opportunities.

THE 5 Cs OF MEDIA USE

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

MYIR MOBILE [↗](#)

SCHOOL, SPORTS, & CAMP FORMS [↗](#)

PATIENT EDUCATION [↗](#)