

# Health and Wellness: 11 to 14 Years

## Development

Your child should:

- enjoy school
- perform at grade level
- have friends at school
- participate in activities outside of school
- participate in family activities
- help with chores.

## Healthy Eating

- Encourage your child to choose healthful snacks such as fruits, vegetables, yogurt, turkey, peanut butter sandwich, or cheese and whole grain crackers. Avoid processed foods as much as possible.
- Your child should help with meal planning, preparation and clean up.
- Keep healthful foods and beverages on hand. Your child should only be drinking milk or water. Discourage other beverages, including juice, soft drinks and sports drinks. Limit sweets, treats and snack foods (such as chips), fast foods, and fried foods.
- Milk is an excellent source of calcium and vitamin D.
- Menstruating females need extra iron in their diet. Good sources of iron are lean beef, iron-fortified cereal or oatmeal, soybeans, spinach and tofu.

## Physical Activity

- The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends children get at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity each day. This time can be spread throughout the day. Encourage your child to participate in sports or other physical activities such as running, biking, martial arts, etc.
- Physical activity is important for physical and emotional development.

## Sleep

- Your child needs between 8 and 12 hours of sleep each night.
- Set a bedtime that allows your child to get enough sleep and wake up well rested for school.
- Turn off all screens at least 1 hour before bedtime. The bedroom should remain screen-free, including televisions, during sleeping hours.

## Safety

- Your child needs to stay in a booster seat until he or she is at least 4 feet 9 inches or taller. The lap belt must lie snugly across the upper thighs, not the stomach. The shoulder belt should lie snugly across the shoulder and chest and not across the neck or face.
- Your child should be buckled and ride in the back seat until age 13.

**(over)**

- Do not talk or text on your cellphone while driving.
- Your child still needs to wear a helmet when riding a bicycle or scooter, or when skating or sledding.
- When your child is outside, use sunscreen with an SPF of at least 15. Use a brand with the active ingredients titanium dioxide or zinc oxide. Avoid any that contain oxybenzone.
- Keep any prescription medicines out of view of your child. Medicines should only be used by the person for whom they were prescribed. Expired medicines should be disposed of properly. Many children who abuse prescription pain medicine get them from their medicine cabinets at home.
- If your child does not know how to swim, enroll him or her in swimming lessons.
- Talk about appropriate and inappropriate relationships with friends, classmates and adults. Teach your child to establish personal boundaries and to say “no” if he or she is uncomfortable.
- Keep all knives, guns or other weapons out of your child’s reach. Lock and store guns and ammunition in separate locations.
- Do not let anyone smoke or vape in your house or car at any time.

### **What To Know About Screen Time**

- Screen time includes watching television and using devices such as cellphones, video games, computers and other electronics.
- The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends setting consistent limits on screen times. Make sure screen time does not get in the way of sleeping, physical activity, homework and family time. Children need screen-free playtime for social and emotional development.
- Keep bedrooms and meal times screen-free. Turn off all screens at least 1 hour before bedtime.

- Teach your child about the importance of privacy and not sharing passwords or any personal information with anyone except parents. Parents should have access and passwords to all of their child’s online accounts.
- Talk about the risks (sexting, bullying) and benefits of social media and set boundaries. Consider a written contract for use of social media, electronics and the internet.
- Remind your child that once thoughts and images are shared on the internet, they are permanent.

### **What Your Child Needs**

- Set aside time every day for completing homework during the school year and reading during the summer. This time should be free of television, texting and other distractions.
- This is an important time to stay connected with your child. Spend time together. You will not always agree on things, so work together to solve problems.
- Talk about family responsibilities and how they change with age such as household chores, yard work, and caring for younger siblings.
- Have clear family rules and expectations around curfews, academic performance, and with whom your child spends time.
- Encourage your child to make good decisions about choosing friends. It is also important for you to get to know his or her friends.
- Talk to your child about the risks and dangers of using alcohol, drugs, smoking and vaping. Talk about not accepting car rides from someone who may be drinking or doing drugs.
- Talk about sex in the context of your family values and expectations. Talking about sex does not make it more likely that your child will start being sexual activity. The more open you are about these topics, the more likely your child will come to you with questions and then make positive choices.

- If your child is sexually active, he or she should use birth control. It is important to use condoms to help avoid getting or giving sexually transmitted infections, including HIV. Your child should be tested every year for chlamydia and may need to be tested for other infections as well. Your child can talk to his or her health care provider about these topics.
- According to Minnesota state law, adolescents have the right to confidential health care for pregnancy and reproductive counseling, drug and alcohol treatment, sexually transmitted infections, and a hepatitis B vaccination.
- Your child may have sexual feelings and attractions for others of the opposite sex, the same sex, or both. Support your child as he or she goes through puberty, develops a gender identity, and learns to manage romantic feelings.
- Early adolescents are often moody, uncooperative, rebellious, self-conscious and self-absorbed. This is normal and should not be taken personally. Find ways to work together to manage emotions. This is an age when mental health conditions such as anxiety, depression, and eating disorders become increasingly common. Signs to be concerned about are if your child's grades drop or if he or she withdraws from family, friends, or activities he or she usually enjoys.
- Encourage your child to try new school or community activities that interest him or her.

## Dental Care

- Make regular dental appointments for cleanings and checkups. Your child may need fluoride supplements if you have well water.
- Remind your child to brush and floss his or her teeth when he or she wakes up and before he or she goes to bed.

## Community and Health Information Resources

- **Healthy Children**  
— [healthychildren.org](http://healthychildren.org)
- **Poison Control**  
— 1-800-222-1222 or [poison.org](http://poison.org)
- **Common Sense Media**  
— [commonsensemedia.org](http://commonsensemedia.org)
- **Change to Chill**  
— [changetochill.org](http://changetochill.org)

## Minnesota

- **MinnesotaHelp.info®**  
— [mnhelp.info](http://mnhelp.info)
- **United Way**  
— [211unitedway.org](http://211unitedway.org)  
— dial 211 or 651-291-0211

## Wisconsin

- **211 Wisconsin**  
— [211wisconsin.communityos.org](http://211wisconsin.communityos.org)  
— dial 211 or 1-877-947-2211

## Your Child's Next Well Checkup

- Your child's next well checkup will be in 1 year.
- Your child may need this vaccination:
  - influenza.

Information about the Vaccines For Children (VFC) program is available if your child is eligible for the program. VFC is a federally funded program that offers vaccines at no cost.

Talk with your health care provider about giving acetaminophen (Tylenol®) after your child's immunizations.