

# Health and Wellness: 12 to 18 Years

## Development

- All aspects of your child's development (physical, social and mental skills) will continue to grow.
- Your child may have questions or concerns about puberty and sexual health. Girls will need to be prepared for menstruation.
- Friendships will become more important. Peer pressure may begin or continue.
- The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends setting a screen time limit that is right for your child and the whole family.
  - Screen time includes watching television and using cellphones, video games, computers and other electronic devices.
  - It's important that screen time never replaces healthful behaviors such as physical activity, sleep and interaction with others.
- The AAP advises keeping all electronic devices out of children's bedrooms.
- Continue a routine for talking about school and doing homework. The AAP advises you not let your child watch TV while doing homework.
- Encourage your child to read for pleasure. This time should be free of television, texting and other distractions. Reading helps your child get ready to talk, improves your child's word skills and teaches him or her to listen and learn. The amount of language your child is exposed to in early years has a lot to do with how he or she will develop and succeed.
- Teach your child respect for property and other people.

- Give your child opportunities for independence within set boundaries.
- Talk honestly with your child about responsibilities and expectations around: school and homework, dating, driving, activities outside of school, keeping a job.

## Food and Beverages

- Children ages 12 to 18 need between 1,600 to 2,500 calories each day. (Active children need more.) A total of 25 to 35 percent of total calories should come from fats.
- Between ages 12 to 18 years, your child needs 1,300 milligrams (mg) of calcium each day. He or she can get this requirement by drinking 3 cups of low-fat or fat-free milk, plus servings of other foods high in calcium (such as yogurt, cheese, orange juice or soy milk with added calcium, broccoli and almonds). Your child can also take a calcium supplement.
- Your child needs at least 600 IU of vitamin D each day.
- Between ages 12 to 13 years, boys and girls need 8 mg of iron a day. After age 13, the recommended requirement changes:
  - boys 14 to 18 years: 11 mg
  - girls 14 to 18 years: 15 mg.
- Lean beef, iron-fortified cereal, oatmeal, soybeans, spinach and tofu are good sources of iron.
- Help your child choose fiber-rich fruits, vegetables and whole grains. Choose and prepare foods and beverages with little added sugars or sweeteners.

**(over)**

- Breakfast is important. Make sure your child eats a healthful breakfast every morning.
- Offer your child healthful snacks such as fruits, vegetables, healthful cereals, yogurt, pudding, turkey, peanut butter sandwich, fruit smoothie, or cheese. Avoid foods high in sugar or fat.
- Limit soft drinks and sweetened beverages (including juice) to no more than one a day. Limit sweets, treats, snack foods (such as chips), fast foods and fried foods.

## Physical Activity

- The American Heart Association recommends children get 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity each day. If your child's school does not offer regular physical education classes, organize daily family activities (such as walking or bike riding) or consider enrolling him or her in classes, team sports, or community education activities.
- In addition to helping build strong bones and muscles, regular physical activity can reduce risks of certain diseases, reduce stress levels, increase self-esteem, help maintain a healthy weight, improve concentration, and help maintain good cholesterol levels.
- Even if your child doesn't think it's "cool," he or she needs to wear the right safety gear for his or her activities, such as a helmet, mouth guard, knee pads, eye protection or life vest.
- You can find more information on health and wellness for children and teens at [healthpoweredkids.org](http://healthpoweredkids.org).

## Sleep

- Children ages 12 to 18 need at least 9 ½ hours of sleep each night on a regular basis.
- Your child should continue a sleep routine (such as washing his or her face and brushing teeth).
- It is still important to keep a regular sleep and waking schedule. Teach your child to get up when called or when the alarm goes off.

- Avoid regular exercise, heavy meals and caffeine right before bed.

## 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 ride in the back seat until age 13.
- Be a good role model for your child. Do not talk or text on your cellphone while driving.
- Do not let anyone smoke in your home or around your child.
- Talk with your child about the dangers of alcohol, drug and tobacco use.
- Make sure your child understands safety guidelines for fire, water, animal safety, firearms, social networking Internet sites, and personal safety (including dating). About one in five high school girls has been physically or sexually abused by a dating partner, according to the American Medical Association.

## Self-esteem

- Provide support, attention and enthusiasm for your child's abilities, achievements and school activities. Show your child affection.
- Get to know your child's friends and their parents.
- Let your child try new skills.
- Older teenagers may want to begin dating. Set boundaries and talk honestly with your child about your family's values and morals.
- Monitor your child for eating disorders. Medical illnesses, they involve abnormal eating behaviors serious enough to cause heart conditions, kidney failure and death. The three most common eating disorders are anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa and binge eating disorder. They often develop during adolescent years or early adulthood. The vast majority of people with eating disorders are teenage girls and young women.

- For information on how to stress less and help teens live a more balanced life, check out [changetochill.org](http://changetochill.org).

## Discipline

- Teach your child consequences for unacceptable or inappropriate behavior. Talk about your family's values and morals and what is right and wrong.
- Use discipline to teach, not punish. Be fair and consistent with discipline.
- **Never shake or hit your child.** If you think you are losing control, make sure your child is safe and take a 10-minute time out. If you are still not calm, call a friend, neighbor or relative to come over and help you. If you have no other options, call First Call for Help at 651-291-0211 or dial 211.

## Dental Care

- Make sure your child brushes his or her teeth twice a day and flosses once a day.
- The second set of molars comes in between ages 11 and 14. Ask the dentist about sealants, coatings applied on the chewing surfaces of the back molars to protect from cavities.
- Make regular dental appointments for cleanings and checkups.
- Your child may be self-conscious if he or she has crooked teeth. An orthodontist can talk with you about choices for straightening teeth.

## Eye Care

- Make eye checkups at least every 2 years.

## Immunizations (Shots) Today

Your child may receive these shots at this time:

- Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria, and acellular pertussis): ages 11 to 12 years
- influenza.

Your child may be eligible for:

- MCV4 (meningococcal conjugate vaccine, quadrivalent): ages 11 to 12 years and age 16 years
- HPV9 (human papilloma virus vaccine)
  - 2 dose series: ages 11 to 14 years
  - 3 dose series: ages 15 to 26 years.
- Meningococcal serogroup B vaccine: ages 16 to 18 years

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

## Lab Work

Your child may have the following tests once between the ages 12 to 16:

- Urinalysis – This is a urine test to look for kidney problems, diabetes and/or infection
- Hemoglobin – This is a blood test to check for anemia, or low blood iron

Your child should have a blood test to check his or her cholesterol once between the ages of 17 and 19. Cholesterol is a fat-like substance found in the blood. High total cholesterol increases the risk of future heart disease.

## Your Child's Next Well Checkup

- Your child should have a yearly well checkup through age 20.
- Your child may need a shot for influenza.