

# Healthy Development and Behavior of Teenagers



Below are developmental changes your teenager may experience by 17 years old. Talk with your doctor at your teen's next well-visit if you have any questions or concerns about your teen's development or behavior.

## Social and Emotional Changes

- Has more interest in romantic relationships and sexuality
- Has fewer conflicts with parents
- Shows more independence from parents
- Has a deeper capacity for caring and sharing and for developing more intimate relationships
- Spends less time with parents and more time with friends

- May feel a lot of sadness or depression, which can lead to poor grades at school, alcohol or drug use, unsafe sex and other problems

## Thinking and Learning Changes

- Develops stronger work habits
- Shows more concern about future school and work plans
- Is better able to give reasons for their own choices, including what is right or wrong

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## Healthy Ways to Help Your Teen Learn and Grow

### Development

- Spend time with your teen doing things you enjoy together. Talk about friends, accomplishments and struggles. If you're concerned that your teen is feeling sad, depressed, nervous, angry, irritable or hopeless, contact their doctor.
- Praise your teen's effort and accomplishments. Learn ways to offer praise and promote positive self-talk to help grow your teen's self-esteem. *Scan the QR code on side 2*
- Help your teen learn to use good judgement. When a problem comes up, encourage your teen to develop healthy solutions while making yourself available for advice and support.
- Respect your teen's opinions and be mindful of their thoughts and feelings. Show you are listening.
- Support your teen in finding activities they have an interest in. Encourage your teen to volunteer in the community and participate in school activities like sports, art, music and other clubs.

- Get to know your teen's friends and their families. Know what your teen is doing and whether a responsible adult is present. Talk with your teen about when to call you, where you can find them and when they'll be home.

### Behavior

- When conflict happens, be clear about goals and expectations (showing respect, maintaining good grades, helping with housework), but allow your teen's input on how to reach those goals (such as when or how to study or clean).
- Have honest and direct conversations with your teen about drinking, smoking, drugs and sex (including sexting). Plan for difficult situations and discuss what to do, like when your teen is feeling pressured to use drugs, have sex, or is offered a ride by someone who has been drinking. Get helpful, age-appropriate conversation tips. *Scan the QR code on side 2*

## Healthy Habits

- Encourage your teen to eat healthy, well-balanced meals and get enough sleep. They should exercise at least 1 hour each day. Set a good example by making healthy choices for yourself, and consider making exercise an activity you do together.
- Have your teen visit the dentist twice each year.

## Drug & Alcohol Use

- Teens have a tremendous amount of life stressors including schoolwork, sports, other extracurricular activities and part-time jobs. For some, drug and alcohol use can be a way to cope with stress, fit in with peers, feel older or satisfy curiosity. Learn how to help prevent teen drug and alcohol use. *Scan the QR code*

## Vaping & E-Cigarettes

- Vaping is dangerous, highly addictive and harmful to a teen's health and brain development. Learn how to talk with your teen about the harmful effects of vaping from a Cincinnati Children's clinical toxicologist. *Scan the QR code*

## Suicide Prevention

- Talk with your teen about their concerns and pay attention to any changes in behavior. If your teen seems sad or depressed, ask if they are having suicidal thoughts. Asking about suicidal thoughts will not cause your teen to have these thoughts. Instead, it will show that you care about the way your teen is feeling. Learn the warning signs of suicide and ways to get help. *Scan the QR code*

## Bullying & Digital Safety

- Keeping teens safe online requires a mix of monitoring and teaching. Learn proactive ways to monitor your teen's social media use as well as ideas for teaching appropriate online behavior. *Scan the QR code*

## Vehicle Safety

- Everyone should wear a lap and shoulder seat belt in the car. Be clear about your expectations when your teen is the driver. Distractions can be deadly. Limit the number of friends allowed in the car and be clear about the dangers of distracted driving, especially texting.

Find more useful, healthy tips for your family:

### Cincinnati Children's Blog

Visit: [blog.cincinnatichildrens.org](http://blog.cincinnatichildrens.org)

### Young & Healthy Podcast

Listen on:



*This information is meant to support your visit with your child's doctor. It should not take the place of the advice of your pediatrician.*

Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention | *Bright Futures: Guidelines for Health Supervision of Infants, Children and Adolescents, 4th Edition* | American Academy of Pediatrics

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