



Important Points for the Early Adolescent: 11-14 Years

Physical Development:

Girls between 10 and 16 will grow an average of 8 inches and gain 38 lbs; boys between the ages of 12-16 will grow an average of 12 inches and gain close to 48 lbs. This growth spurt will require additional energy in the form of nutritious and balanced food. The Food Guide Pyramid shows a range of servings for each food group. How much you actually eat depends on your age and activity level. Teenage boys who are active require about 2800 calories and should eat the highest range of servings. Teenage girls who are active require about 2200 calories and should eat servings in the middle of the range of servings. No more than 30% of your diet should come from fats. For a 2200 calorie diet, that would equal 73g of fat each day and for a 2800 calorie diet, 93g of fat each day. Adolescents require about 1200 to 1500 mg of calcium each day. Adolescents also require about 12 (males) to 15 (females) mg of iron each day. All menstruating females should take a multivitamin with iron every day. Please encourage your child to exercise for at least 30 minutes every day. Limit TV viewing to 1 hour a day; this means computer games, smartphones, snapchat, and Internet time too! Get adequate sleep; during growth spurts, teens sleep more.

Puberty:

The first sign of puberty in girls, which occurs at an average age of 10 1/2 years, is breast development (thelarche). This begins with breast budding, or the formation of small lumps or nodules under one or both nipples. These lumps may be tender and they may be different sizes at first. This is usually also the beginning of their growth spurt. Next, in about six months, pubic hair develops (adrenarche), although in some children, pubic hair is the first sign of puberty, and then axillary hair begins to grow. Over the next few years, breast size will continue to increase and there will be a progressive increase in development of pubic hair and the external genitalia, leading to the first period or menarche (occurring at an average age of 12 1/2 to 13 years), which usually occurs about two years after puberty begins and coincides with their peak in height velocity. Development continues and the whole process is completed in 3-4 years, eventually reaching adult breast and areolar size and an adult pattern of pubic hair. A child will have also reached her final adult height about two years after menarche. Puberty generally begins later in boys, at an average age of 11 1/2 to 12 years. The first sign of puberty in boys is an increase in size of the testicles. This is followed a few months later by the growth of pubic hair. Puberty continues with an increase in size of the testicles and penis and continued growth of pubic and axillary hair. Boys undergo their peak growth spurt about 2-3 years later than girls. Also, this usually begins with an enlargement of the hands and feet and is later followed by growth in the arms, legs, trunk and chest. Other changes include a deepening of the voice, an increase in muscle mass, the ability to get erections and ejaculate (especially spontaneous nocturnal emissions or 'wet dreams'), and in some boys, breast development (gynecomastia). Development continues and the whole process is completed in 3-4 years, eventually reaching adult testicle and penis size and an adult pattern of pubic hair. This is followed by the development of chest and facial hair. Puberty is also associated with adolescents beginning to have axillary perspiration and body odor, and acne.

Touchpoints:

The early adolescent will experience ambivalence about who she is; she begins to question authority and society standards. He struggles with the underlying need to please adults and the rejection of organized norms. While your teenager may seem like she is moving away from you, she will still depend on you quite a bit, and she should feel like she can come to you with questions and problems. When she does come to you, try and listen carefully without interrupting. Avoid criticizing or trying to fix all of your child's problems for her. Instead, be supportive and offer a suggestion on what you think is the right thing to do. And finally, be supportive of her decisions involving problems that aren't very serious. Even if she makes some wrong choices, it will teach her to take responsibility for solving her problems. Be more aggressive in intervening with more serious situations, such as drug or alcohol use. It is also important to respect your child's growing need for privacy.

Safety:

Use seat belts, helmets, protective sports gear and sunscreen. If guns are in your house, lock the guns and ammunition separately. Talk to your child about alcohol, tobacco, drugs, sex and peer pressure.

What to expect during this visit:

Between 10 and 12 years, we will administer the Tdap, Menactra and Gardasil vaccinations. Please refer to the "After the Shots" handout for further instructions. Other screening includes vision, hearing, and blood pressure. Please let us know if your family has a history of high blood pressure, high cholesterol or triglycerides.