



Indiana University Health
IU Health Physicians Primary Care

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Education



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Fourteen-Seventeen Years

Development and Behavior:

- By this age girls have usually completed their physical and sexual development, males may continue to develop (both physically and sexually) over the next few years.

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- This is an age of sexual exploration and experimentation. Discuss sexual responsibility with you child, stressing that abstinence is the only safe sex. Do however; discuss other birth control options as well.
- Peer influence is still very important at this age. Teenagers enjoy close friendships with peers of both sexes. Continue to encourage your teenager to bring her friends home.
- Expect periods of estrangement due to your teenager's increasing independence parental conflicts over this need for independence are maximal at this age. Encourage age-appropriate decision making. Although your teenager may be resistant, they still need rules and expectations from you.
- Your teenager should be thinking about goals for the future, along with realistic appreciation of what will be required to reach those goals.
- Support your child's participation in extra curricular activities and/or sports.
- Promote good health habits by encouraging your child to get enough sleep, to eat a well balanced diet and to get daily exercise. Promote good oral hygiene by scheduling regular dentist visits for your teenager. Discourage alcohol, drugs and tobacco.
- Adolescents are under tremendous pressure these days from a wide variety of influences including friends, advertising, television, music and role models. Because of these pressures, kids may begin alcohol, drugs, having sex and turning to gangs. Other kids withdraw and become depressed. Try to prevent problems by loving and accepting your child by openly discussing issues with them by being a good example and by encouraging healthy friends and groups. Also, help him devise strategies for handling peer pressure. If you suspect your child is having any of the above problems, ask for help. Problems are best prevented, but can also be helped if already started by getting good professional care.

Safety:

- Teach your child to always wear a seat belt every time they get in the car.
- Have smoke and carbon monoxide detectors in each part of your home and test them monthly.
- Teach your child what to do in case of a fire.
- Lock up firearms. Make certain that they are unloaded and that the key is hidden.

- Be sure your child can swim and uses sunscreen when appropriate. Tanning beds are dangerous.
- Talk to your teenager about gun safety, peer violence, sexual responsibility, care safety and date rape. Assure your teenager they can always call you or another responsible adult when he or she is in any kind of potentially dangerous situation.
- Counsel your child about the dangers of drugs, alcohol and tobacco.
- Stress the importance of your teenager never drinking and driving-or getting in the care with someone else who has been drinking. Develop a safe plan with him or her if they are ever caught in this situation.