

Well Visit, 12 years to Young Teen: Care Instructions

Your Care Instructions

Your teen may be busy with school, sports, clubs, and friends. Your teen may need some help managing his or her time with activities, homework, and getting enough sleep and eating healthy foods.

Most young teens tend to focus on themselves as they seek to gain independence. They are learning more ways to solve problems and to think about things. While they are building confidence, they may feel insecure. Their peers may replace you as a source of support and advice. But they still value you and need you to be involved in their life.

Follow-up care is a key part of your child's treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if your child is having problems. It's also a good idea to know your child's test results and keep a list of the medicines your child takes.

How can you care for your child at home?

Eating and a healthy weight

- Encourage healthy eating habits. Your teen needs nutritious meals and healthy snacks each day. Stock up on fruits and vegetables. Offer healthy snacks, such as whole grain crackers or yogurt.
- Help your child limit fast food. Also encourage your child to make healthier choices when eating out, such as choosing smaller meals or having a salad instead of fries.
- Encourage your teen to drink water instead of soda or juice drinks.
- Make meals a family time, and set a good example by making it an important time of the day for sharing.

Healthy habits

- Encourage your teen to be active for at least one hour each day. Plan family activities, such as trips to the park, walks, bike rides, swimming, and gardening.
- Limit TV, social media, and video games. Check for violence, bad language, and sex. Teach your child how to show respect and be safe when using social media.
- Do not smoke or vape or allow others to smoke around your teen. If you need help quitting, talk to your doctor about stop-smoking programs and medicines. These can increase your chances of quitting for good. Be a good model so your teen will not want to try smoking or vaping.

Safety

- Make your rules clear and consistent. Be fair and set a good example.
- Show your teen that seat belts are important by wearing yours every time you drive. Make sure everyone buckles up.
- Make sure your teen wears pads and a helmet that fits properly when riding a bike or scooter or when skateboarding or in-line skating.
- It is safest not to have a gun in the house. If you do, keep it unloaded and locked up. Lock ammunition in a separate place.
- Teach your teen that underage drinking can be harmful. It can lead to making poor choices. Tell your teen to call for a ride if there is any problem with drinking.

Parenting

- Try to accept the natural changes in your teen and your relationship with your teen.
- Know that your teen may not want to do as many family activities.
- Respect your teen's privacy. Be clear about any safety concerns you have.
- Have clear rules, but be flexible as your teen tries to be more independent. Set consequences for breaking the rules.
- Listen when your teen wants to talk. This will build confidence that you care and will work with your teen to have a good relationship. Help your teen decide which activities are okay to do on their own, such as staying alone at home or going out with friends.
- Spend some time with your teen doing what they like to do. This will help your communication and relationship.

Talk about sexuality

- Start talking about sexuality early. This will make it less awkward each time. Be patient. Give yourselves time to get comfortable with each other. Start the conversations. Your teen may be interested but too embarrassed to ask.
- Create an open environment. Let your teen know that you are always willing to talk. Listen carefully. This will reduce confusion and help you understand what is truly on your teen's mind.
- Communicate your values and beliefs. Your teen can use your values to develop their own set of beliefs.
- Talk about the pros and cons of not having sex, condom use, and birth control before your teen is sexually active. Talk to your teen about the chance of unplanned pregnancy.
- Talk to your teen about common STIs (sexually transmitted infections), such as chlamydia. This is a common STI that can cause infertility if it is not treated. Chlamydia screening is recommended yearly for all sexually active young women.

School

Tell your teen why you think school is important. Show interest in your teen's school. Encourage your teen to join a school team or activity. If your teen is having trouble with

classes, ask the school counselor to help find a tutor. If your teen is having problems with friends, other students, or teachers, work with your teen and the school staff to find out what is wrong.

Immunizations

Flu immunization is recommended once a year for all children ages 6 months and older. Talk to your doctor if your teen did not yet get the vaccines for human papillomavirus (HPV), meningococcal disease, and tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis.

When should you call for help?

Watch closely for changes in your teen's health, and be sure to contact your doctor if:

- You are concerned that your teen is not growing or learning normally for his or her age.
- You are worried about your teen's behavior.
- You have other questions or concerns.

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