

# 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.
- Limit your child to 1 to 2 hours of quality screen time each day, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). Screen time includes television, video game and computer use. Watch TV with your child and supervise Internet use (including social networking sites).
- The AAP advises keeping TVs, video games and computers 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.
- 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.

## Diet

- 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 with added calcium, broccoli and almonds).

## Your child's growth:

**Weight:** \_\_\_\_ lbs. \_\_\_\_ oz. (\_\_\_\_ percent)

**Height:** \_\_\_\_ in. (\_\_\_\_ percent)

**Blood pressure:** \_\_\_\_ mm Hg

**BMI:** \_\_\_\_ percent

- 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.
- Breakfast is important. Make sure your child eats a healthful breakfast every morning.
- Help your child choose fiber-rich fruits, vegetables and whole grains. Choose and prepare foods and beverages with little added sugars or sweeteners.
- 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.

## Exercise

- 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.



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- In addition to helping build strong bones and muscles, regular exercise 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.

## 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

- When riding in a car, your child needs to be buckled with a lap and shoulder belt. At 13 years old, he or she may ride in the front seat. (Follow directions from your health care provider.)
- 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.

## 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.

## Dental Care

- Make sure your child brushes his or her teeth twice a day and flosses once a day.
- 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 two years.

## Immunizations (Shots) Today

Your child may receive these shots at this time:

- Tdap (tetanus + diphtheria toxoids and acellular pertussis vaccine, adolescent/adult): ages 11 to 12 years
- MCV4 (meningococcal conjugate vaccine, quadrivalent): ages 11 to 12 years, and a booster at age 16.
- HPV4 (human papillomavirus vaccine; three-dose series): ages 11 to 12 years
- influenza.

## Your Child's Next Well Checkup

The Minnesota Department of Health recommends yearly well child checkups through age 18. Your child may need a shot for influenza.