

Healthy Development and Behavior of Preteens & Teens



Below are developmental changes your child may experience between 12 and 14 years old. Talk with your doctor at your child's next well-visit if you have any questions or concerns about your child's development or behavior.

Social and Emotional Changes

- Has more ability to appreciate and understand the unique differences among people
- Shows more concern for others' feelings
- May care more about the way they look
- Develops a greater ability to form stronger relationships with adults outside their families who may function as mentors
- Learns to interpret nonverbal cues

- Has frequent mood swings
- May be influenced by their friends
- May feel stressed from more challenging schoolwork

Thinking and Learning Changes

- Has more ability for complex thought
- Is able to better express emotions through talking
- Develops a stronger sense of right and wrong

Healthy Ways to Help Your Child Learn and Grow

Development

- Spend time with your child doing things you enjoy together. Talk with your child about friends, accomplishments and struggles. If you're concerned that your child is feeling sad, depressed, nervous, angry, irritable or hopeless, contact your child's doctor.
- Give praise when your child has done something well, rather than complimenting the way they look. Learn ways to offer praise and promote positive self-talk to help grow your child's self-esteem. *Scan the QR code on side 2*
- Give more opportunities for your child to make decisions, while encouraging them to make healthy choices related to nutrition, sleep habits, physical activity, friend groups, proper hygiene, and other areas of physical health, mental health and wellness.
- Respect your child's opinions and be mindful of their thoughts and feelings. Show you are listening.
- Help your child discover activities they have an interest in other than schoolwork.

- Get to know your child's friends and their families. Be involved in your child's life so you know where they are, who they're with and what they're doing.
- Talk with your child about ways the body changes physically and emotionally during puberty.

Behavior

- When conflict happens, be clear about goals and expectations (showing respect, maintaining good grades, helping with housework), but allow your child's input on how to reach those goals (such as when or how to study or clean).
- Use discipline to teach your child, not to punish or to make your child feel bad about themselves.
- Teach your child to respect others. Help your child manage conflict or feelings—like anger or fear—in healthy, nonviolent ways.
- Have honest and direct conversations with your child about drinking, smoking, drugs and sex (including sexting). Get helpful, age-appropriate conversation tips. *Scan the QR code on side 2*

School

- Praise your child for working hard at school. Find ways to get involved, such as attending school events and meeting your child's teachers. Encourage your child to participate in school clubs, sports teams and volunteer opportunities.
- Talk with your child about being responsible for their schoolwork. Encourage daily reading.

Healthy Habits

- Together as a family, eat healthy meals that include foods from the basic food groups. Include at least 3 servings of calcium (low-fat or fat-free dairy) and 5 servings of fruits and vegetables each day. Limit sugary foods, salt and low-nutrient foods.
- Have your child brush their teeth twice each day and floss once per day. Take your child to the dentist twice each year.
- Encourage at least 1 hour of physical activity each day.

Digital Media Use

- Consider making a family media plan to put rules in place for media use, and balance screen time with other family activities, including physical exercise. Learn how to achieve a healthy balance. *Scan the QR code*

Drug & Alcohol Use

- Adolescents 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 child's health and brain development. Learn how to talk with your child about the harmful effects of vaping from a Cincinnati Children's clinical toxicologist. *Scan the QR code*

Suicide Prevention

- According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, suicide is the second leading cause of death among people aged 10–34 years. Learn from a Cincinnati Children's child and adolescent psychiatrist how to have a conversation with your child about suicide and when to seek help. *Scan the QR code*

Bullying & Digital Safety

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

Vehicle Safety

- Have your child ride in the back seat (until at least 13 years of age) and use a booster seat until your child reaches 4 feet 9 inches tall. Everyone should wear a lap and shoulder seat belt in the car.

Find more useful, healthy tips for your family:

Cincinnati Children's Blog

Visit: 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

KN1887_06/23 BRV901907

