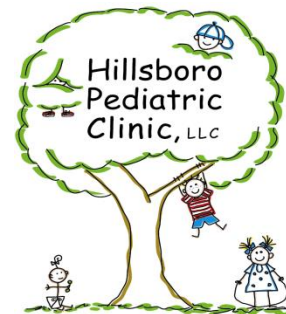


Older Teenagers: In motion



An older teenager's life should be active: friends, working, and volunteering in the community; exercising this stronger body or playing sports; exploring life experiences to see what could be a fun past time or a potential life's passion. Planning for college, trade school or work can be exciting and stressful. It is a learning opportunity for the student as well as parents. It is time for more teen responsibility with continued parent guidance. The goal is to have many opportunities to learn how to progress into adulthood.

Taking care of themselves:

Nutrition: Have the teenager help choose healthy food. Go grocery shopping together. Plan family meal times to share and support each other's lives. If sports or work get in the way of dinner time, plan to eat other meals together. Make meal time an electronic-free zone so that you are fully present to hear each other.

Exercise: Exercise is good for the body and a way to relieve stress. If your teen does not have regular exercise, it is not too late to start a good exercise plan. Have a family walk, swim or choose-the-exercise night, anything that gets the heart rate pumping faster. Make it a fun routine that is on the calendar for the whole family and/or with friends. Exercise is more fun and easier to achieve if shared with someone else. If your teen is playing sports, be sure they are doing all the stretches and injury prevention exercises that their coach recommends.

Sleep: Sleep is a necessity, not a luxury. On average, teens need 8-10 hours of sleep a night. Getting a full night sleep will help the body function properly, mentally focus, make decisions, test and sports performance, mood stability, fight illness by strengthening the immune system, and decrease the risk of car crashes.

Responsibilities, Behaviors and Discipline: 17 and 18 year olds are on the verge of being able to care for themselves. Life is easier when you talk with your teen regularly to give a clear understanding of expected responsibilities and behavior. Continue to talk to your teen about risky behaviors and setting rules prohibiting drug use and teen drinking. Teens should be aware of the importance of self-control. Everyone in the home, including teenagers, is expected to take responsibility for chores around the house. This is the age of progressive responsibility and change. Sometimes the response to change is feeling stressed, which can be displayed as anxiety, sadness and having a good day one day and unhappy the next. Moodiness can be normal and anticipated; however, if there are signs of being depressed, not enjoying life, not caring for oneself, changes in sleep or eating patterns, or sadness lasting greater than two weeks, call your medical provider right away for help.

Financial Education: Talk about financial responsibility. Open a student checking account with a debit card and a preset limit. Have your teen practice using banking tools correctly; learn family guidelines and banking rules; and manage money in the account (paper statements or online). Students under age 23 are often eligible for a waiver of the monthly maintenance fee while enrolled in a high school or college, university or vocational program. Frequently there is a monetary incentive to open an account for a teenager if you ask. Check with your local banks.

Driving: Be proactive. Review safety recommendations for teenage drivers. The CDC states: "As a category of accidents, motor vehicle fatality is the leading cause of death to teenagers, representing over one-third of all deaths." Car insurance for a teenage driver is expensive. Call insurance companies prior to purchasing a car to drive. Obtain several insurance company quotes. Ask insurers what discounts are available: Drivers Education class, Safe Driver Video, non-smoker, multi-car, and/or good grade discounts. Some insurance companies offer discounts based on parent occupation.

Education: Encourage teenagers to do their best in school. Help them to choose some classes that are challenging and some that are fun and to find people who can assist them in reaching goals:

- School advisor: Have your teenager make an appointment to share goals.
- Visit colleges and talk with their representatives.
- Job shadow: It is great way for a teenager to explore occupations and pique their interest.
- Friends and family: Have your teenager share their interests and ask for help to find learning opportunities.
- Volunteer at a religious affiliation and or in the community. It is a way to learn and give back to the community. Develop a way to document volunteerism.
- Go online to review: Check off lists for high school, College admission dates and scholarship opportunities