Well Child Handout: Your Teenage Years

IMMUNIZATIONS

- A Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis) booster:
  - usually given at 10 to 11 years of age
  - If you did not receive, you may need this vaccination
- HPV (human papillomavirus) vaccine:
  - given as early as age 9
  - protects against the virus that causes genital warts and is the leading cause of oral, cervical and penile cancers.
- Meningococcal conjugate vaccine:
  - recommended for ages 11 and 16
  - protects against a devastating form of bacterial meningitis. (Inflammation of the brain and its coverings.)
- Meningococcal B vaccine:
  - may be considered in your later teenage years, especially if you will be living in a dormitory.

NUTRITION

Teens:
Eat in ways that keep your body as healthy as possible. Eat when you are hungry. Stop when you are satisfied. Drink water throughout the day. Avoid soda (one can contains almost 10 spoonful’s of sugar), coffee and sports drinks. Limit how often you eat out. Restaurant portions tend to be much larger than needed. Share a meal or save half for a future meal. Eliminate fast foods. One resource to help you make sure you are getting the nutrients your body needs is:

http://www.choosemyplate.gov/food-groups/. Consider a multivitamin complete with Vitamin D, folic acid and iron, especially if you are vegetarian.

Parents:
Be a role model by making healthy choices yourself. Make family meals a priority. Encourage conversation and avoid screen time during meals. Help teens eat breakfast before heading off to school.

MOOD AND MENTAL HEALTH

Teens:
Most teens can figure out how to find and do the things they enjoy in life and have good relationships with friends, family and other adults. Sometimes, though, teens may feel like they’re too sad, depressed, bored, anxious or angry to do these things. It is important to share these feelings with your care provider, parent or a trusted adult. California also has a Youth Crisis Line: 1-800-843-5200

Parents:
Worsening school performance, not adhering to parental rules and substance use disorders may suggest your teen is struggling with a mental health problem. Anxiety can cause significant distress and affect functioning at school at home or with friends.

RELATIONSHIPS

Teens:
Learn to manage conflict nonviolently. Be thoughtful about the possible hurtful effects on others in your e-mail, social media and texting. Take time to talk with adults you trust about any questions you have about your gender identity or sexual orientation (You have the right to confidentiality with your primary care provider, unless you are planning to harm yourself or others). Healthy relationships are built on respect for one another, in dating situations, “No” means NO. Saying “No”, is OK, even if you have said “Yes” in the past.

Parents:
Teach nonviolent conflict resolution. Talk about Internet safety and avoid cyberbullying. Get to know your teen’s friends and their activities. Make time at the end of the day to reconnect.
SAFE SEX

Teens:
Abstaining from any type of sex is the safest way to prevent sexually transmitted infections (STI's) and pregnancy (STIs can be transmitted through vaginal, oral and anal sex). If you are sexually active, boys should always use condoms. Girls should also use a method of birth control (birth control pills, IUD or implant) along with a condom. Screen for STIs (you can be screened confidentially at our office).

Parents:
Help your teen resist pressures to have sex. Talk about how to make healthy decisions about relationships and sex including consistent use of condoms and birth control.

STREET DRUGS, TOBACCO, ALCOHOL AND PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

Teens:
Avoid situations in which alcohol or drugs are readily available. Take your medications only as prescribed, do not share with friends or take anyone else’s medications. Vaping or smoking any substance can damage your lungs. Marijuana and alcohol have more impact young brains and are bad for brain development. Nicotine is one of the most addicting drugs we know and one of the hardest to stop. Don’t drive a car with a driver that has been using drugs or alcohol.

Parents:
Set a good example with your own responsible use of alcohol and other substances. Clearly discuss rules and expectations for acceptable behavior. Lock your liquor cabinet and store your prescriptions medications safely. Be involved in your teen’s life. Know where and with whom your teen is spending time with. Make a plan with your teen about how to get home from situations where they feel unsafe.

HEALTHY LIFESTYLES

Teens:
Try to be physically active an hour or more each day. Keep active with the things you like to do. You don’t have to exercise all at one time! It is also important to get enough sleep, your body needs more than 8 hours each night. Stop screen time an hour before bedtime. Your brain can’t pay attention to driving and a mobile device at the same time. Turn off your cell and put it in the trunk so you are not tempted to use it while driving. Everyone should wear seat belts in vehicles, use helmets and other protective gear when, biking, skating, ATVs or motorcycles.

Parents:
Help teens limit screen time by setting limits and encouraging more physical activity. Create family times that involve physical activities. Overnight, keep computers, cell phones and tablets outside of bedrooms. For more information about how to keep your teen safe in and around cars, visit www.safercar.gov/parents. Reinforce that distracted driving is dangerous. Be a good role model; be involved in your teen’s life; set clear rules and limits.