

Normal Development: Middle Adolescence (15 to 17 Years Old)

Adolescence is divided into 3 stages: **early** (12 to 14 years), **middle** (15 to 17 years), and **late** (18 to 20 years). While certain attitudes, behaviors, and physical milestones tend to occur at certain ages, a wide spectrum of growth and behavior for each age is normal. Consequently, these guidelines are offered as a way of showing a general progression through the developmental stages rather than as fixed requirements. It is perfectly natural for a teen to attain some milestones earlier and other milestones later than the general trend.

Physical Development

- Most girls have completed the physical changes related to puberty by age 15.
- Boys are still maturing and gaining strength, muscle mass, and height and are completing the development of sexual traits.

Emotional Development

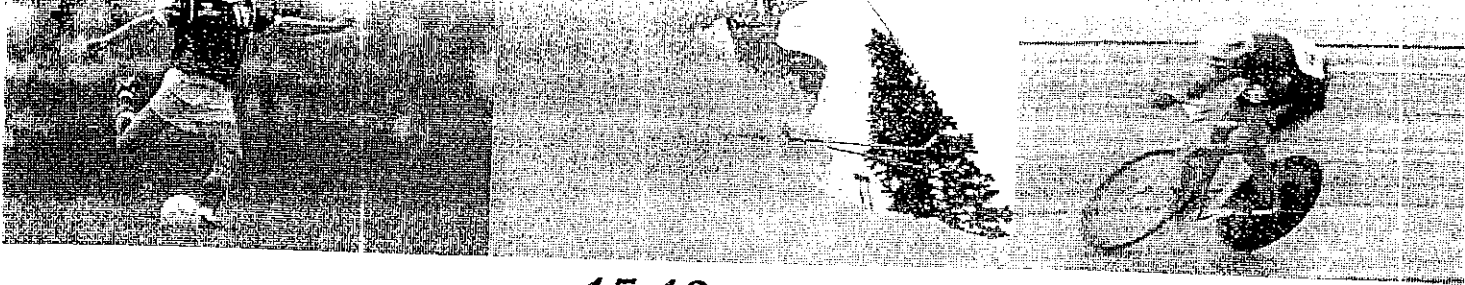
- May have anxiety over school and test scores.
- Is self-involved (may have high expectations and low self-concept).
- Seeks privacy and time alone.
- Is concerned about physical and sexual attractiveness.
- May complain that parents prevent him or her from doing things independently.
- Starts to integrate both physical and emotional intimacy into relationships.

Social Development

- Is increasingly aware of social behaviors of friends.
- Seeks friends that share similar beliefs, values, and interests. Friends become more important.
- Starts to have more intellectual interests.
- May be influenced by peers to try risky behaviors (alcohol, tobacco, sex).

Mental Development

- Becomes better able to set goals and think in terms of the future.
- Has a better understanding of complex interrelationships of problems and issues.
- Starts to develop moral ideals and to select role models.



15-18 years old

SAFETY TIPS FROM YOUR DOCTOR

In adolescence, puberty is well underway, and complete in many individuals. There is a decreased preoccupation with the body and an increased, intense involvement with peers. Conflicts with parents over the issue of independence are maximal at this time. The peer group set the behavioral standards. It is a time of sexual exploration and experimentation.

1. **Car/Bike Safety**
 - Drive responsibly. Drive defensively, do not speed. Always buckle the seat belt **EVERY TIME** he or she rides in any car. Remind your passengers to buckle up. **Never drive when drinking, when drunk, when under the influence of marijuana or other drugs, or when angry.** Do not ride in a car with a driver (including a parent) who had been drinking or using drugs or who drives recklessly.
 - Minimize risk-taking behavior when riding all-terrain vehicles and bicycles. **Wear a helmet when riding a motorcycle or bicycle.** Do not accept rides from or attempt to hitchhike with strangers.
2. **Health Habits/Self-Care**
 - Eat a well balanced diet, avoid excessive junk food. Avoid excess salt, limit carbohydrate snacks. Maintain appropriate weight. Brush and floss teeth regularly. Practice good dental care. Get adequate sleep. Seek advice or treatment about acne. Practice breast and testes self-examination.
3. **Accident Hazards/Firearms in the Home**
 - Young adults in homes where guns are present are in more danger of being shot by themselves, their friends, or family members than injured by an intruder. It is best to keep all guns out of the home. If you must keep a gun, keep it unloaded and in a locked place separate from the ammunition. **Handguns are especially dangerous.** Make sure your son or daughter is not at a friend's home where there is a gun. Talk to your young adult about guns in school or on your streets. Find out if your son or daughter's friends carry guns.
 - Supervise possibly hazardous activities; use of power tools, and participation in water activities.
4. **Sport Safety**
 - At this age your child may be playing baseball, soccer, or other sports. **Be sure your child wears the protective equipment made for the sport,** such as shin pads, mouth guards, and helmets. Parent's should show praise and encourage these activities.
5. **Fires**
 - Make an escape plan in case of a fire in your home. Your fire department can tell you how. Teach your son or daughter what to do when the smoke alarm rings. Practice what you and your family would do if there were a fire. Household fires are a threat to your families life, as well as your own. **Install smoke detectors, test the batteries every month, and change the batteries once a year.**
6. **Good Parenting Practices**
 - **Discuss tobacco, alcohol and drugs with your child.** Counsel the young adult about sexual activity. Emphasize that it is all right to say "no". If the individual is sexually active, discuss contraceptives and methods of preventing sexually transmitted diseases and cystitis. Discuss AIDS and its prevention. Prepare girls for menarche; teach how to use tampons.
 - **Establish fair rules to be followed at home. Assign chores around the house. Provide an allowance,** allow some work experience. Spend time with the adolescent. Expect periods of estrangement in parent adolescent relationships. Limit TV viewing and facilitate alternative activities. Establish rules and regulations. Take seriously your function as a role model. Respect their privacy. Promote independence and self-responsibility.
 - Stress the importance of educational activities and the self-responsibility of homework. Encourage your child to invite peers home. Avoid downgrading his or her friends. Allow the adolescent to make age-appropriate decisions.

Adolescent Safety Tips

Accidents are the leading cause of death for children. Most of these deaths could easily be prevented and it is therefore important to keep your child's safety in mind at all times. Here are some tips to keep your teenager safe:

Driving safety: Adolescents have a high likelihood of being involved in traffic accidents.

- ALWAYS follow the posted speed limit when driving.
- ALWAYS buckle up, even when in the back seat.
- NEVER drive when drinking, and never get in the car with a driver who has been drinking.
- NEVER ride in the back of a pickup truck.

Adolescents are at high risk of being injured in accidents involving guns and weapons.

- NEVER hang around with other kids who have guns or knives.
- NEVER play with weapons in your home.

Hanging out with friends or strangers

- NEVER meet anyone from the Internet without having your parents meet them first.
- NEVER roughhouse and shove, or throw chairs when playing with friends.

Traveling alone

- AVOID traveling alone late at night.
- AVOID shortcuts home that are dark or areas where no one is around.

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Sports safety

- ALWAYS wear protective equipment, such as helmets, kneepads, and mouth and teeth protection, when participating in contact sports.
- ALWAYS wear eye protection when playing contact sports.
- ALWAYS wear protective gear when cycling, rollerblading or riding a scooter.
- AVOID dangerous traffic when cycling, rollerblading or scooting.

Fire safety

- NEVER leave candles unattended, and ALWAYS extinguish them before going to sleep.
- NEVER smoke cigarettes in bed or leave matches where children can have access to them.

Environmental hazards

- NEVER swim in areas that are not supervised by lifeguards.
- NEVER swim at night.
- NEVER swim after drinking alcohol.
- AVOID boating with others who have been drinking, or at night.
- ALWAYS wear a life preserver.
- NEVER play in elevators and around escalators.

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