Caring for your Early Adolescent 11-14 year old

Name _____ Weight _____ Height _____ Date _____

Fitness and Nutrition

- Have your teen eat from the five food groups on a daily basis:
- fruits
- vegetables
- whole grains
- dairy (milk, cheese, yogurt)
- meat, chicken, fish, beans, and eggs
- Calcium is important for bone growth and strength. Good sources are dairy products, spinach, broccoli, and calcium-fortified orange juice.
- Iron is important in order to prevent anemia. Good iron sources include red meats, dark green vegetables, and iron-fortified breads and cereals.
- Have your teen make physical activity a part of your teen's daily life. Benefits of physical activity include:
- increased cardiovascular fitness
- increased strength
- decreased tension
- improved mood
- Talk with your teen about joining an organized sports program or activities with friends.

Physical Changes

- Adolescents begin puberty at different times. In general, girls develop two years earlier than boys. The time an individual enters puberty is influenced by when their parents did.
- Girls’ bodies undergo the following changes:
- breasts grow
- hips widen
- hair grows under arms and in the pubic area
- a white vaginal discharge develops and periods begin
- Boys’ bodies undergo the following changes:
- testicles and penis enlarge
- hair grows on the face
- muscles grow
- voice deepens
- shoulders broaden
- wet dreams occur
- Growth tends to occur in spurts.
- Growth timing varies; discuss growth concerns with your clinician.
- There is a very wide range of normal pubertal development.

Emotional Changes

- Adolescents at this age are preoccupied with themselves. They are concerned with whether or not they are normal. Reassure them.
- Many adolescents will begin to challenge family rules, values and behavior in order to form their own identity.
- Teens may need more privacy.
- A sense of being invulnerable combined with an inability to consider long-range consequences may lead to problem behaviors and increased risk-taking.
- Parental supervision and limit setting is necessary. Adolescents need guidance.
- Adolescents are capable of thinking in more abstract terms.
- Some learning problems do not surface until now. Contact the school or a health care provider if your teen is struggling.

Injury Prevention

- Wear a seat belt on every ride and a helmet for biking and skating.
- Never ride with an impaired driver. Avoid distracted driving.
- The safest home for children has no firearms. If present, keep guns unloaded and locked, and lock ammunition separately.
- Use nonviolent ways to resolve conflict. Ask a trusted adult or clinician for help when you feel unsafe.
- Take concerns about depression or self-harm seriously and seek help promptly.

Parenting

- Adolescents need parental support, warmth and guidance.
- Adolescents respond to parents who have high expectations and who set reasonable standards for behavior.
- Rules and consequences need to be clear and carried out consistently. These should be discussed ahead of time to avoid any confusion.
- Adolescents feel lost when there is an absence of structure. They need a clearly defined value system against which to test other's values and discover their own.

- Use “I” statements when discussing a problem. For example, “I feel like you are not listening when you interrupt,” is more useful than, “You are so rude - you always interrupt!”
- Encourage your adolescent to problem solve.
- Treat your adolescent with respect and expect that respect in return.
- Be an active listener. Before responding, try to clarify what the other person has said and try to understand that person's point of view.
- Set up time for weekly family meetings to discuss family business such as vacation plans and to solve family problems.

Relationships

- Encourage angry teens to take time to calm down before they respond.
- Encourage them to examine their choices and think through decisions. They shouldn’t be pressured by others.
- Some adolescents are sexually active; many are not. Teach your teen about the risks of pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases (like chlamydia and AIDS). Abstinence is the best protection against unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. If your teen is sexually active, encourage your teen to protect themself with a condom and use birth control methods.

Health Risks

- Fast foods tend to be high in fat and salt.
- Alcohol and drug use will impair your judgment.
- Educate your teen about cigarettes: they stain hands and teeth yellow, they make you smell like smoke, and will greatly increase your chances of heart disease and lung cancer.
- All tobacco is addictive. Once hooked, stopping can be very difficult.
- Untreated sexually transmitted diseases can lead to infertility and other illnesses, and, in the case of HIV infection, death.
- Limit Screen time to 2 hours with your child by limiting exposure to Cell Phones, Tablets, TV, or Laptops

Managing Stress

Adolescents’ lives can be very stressful at times. Stress can lead to illness, headaches and stomachaches. Here are some ways to reduce stress.

1) Relax where you are - close your eyes and imagine you are in a pleasant setting.

2) Take a break - get some exercise or fresh air.

3) Ask yourself whether it is worth getting upset over.

4) Accept what you cannot change.

5) Take time for yourself.

6) Manage your time. Don't wait until the last minute.

7) Anticipate stressful situations and prepare for them. Evaluate your choices.

Recommended Reading

Growing Up, Meredith, Susan

All Grown Up and No Place To Go, Elkind, David

Get Out of My Life, But First Could You Drive Me and Cheryl To The Mall, Wolf, A.

Adolescents at Risk, Dryfoos, Joy

How To Talk So Kids Will Listen and Listen So Kids Will Talk, Faber & Mazlich