



FOURTEEN TO NINETEEN YEARS (TEEN)

As you become more independent, it is important for you to be responsible for making good decisions and choices that promote the health and well-being of yourself as well as peers and friends of both sexes. Keep in mind the following:

- It is important for you to eat a balanced diet, limiting junk foods and sodas and have regular physical activity.
- You need eight to nine hours of sleep per night.
- Although high school years are a time for experimentation, using illicit drugs, alcohol and tobacco can be dangerous. It is important to be able to say “no”.
- If you have a driver’s license, you need to drive responsibly – that includes wearing a seat belt, driving defensively, not speeding, and never driving when angry, after drinking alcohol, or when under the influence of marijuana or other drugs.
- Abstinence is the best way for you to protect yourself and your partner from pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). However, if you choose to be sexually active, you need to be responsible and protect yourself and your partner from pregnancy and STDs, using contraception at all times, getting regular screening for STDs for both males and females, and having yearly gynecological exams for girls.
- In addition, all teenage males should learn how to perform testes self-examination and should check themselves regularly.
- Females should begin having regular gynecological exams after age 18 or when they first become sexually active. All females in late adolescence should learn the technique for breast self-examination and check their breasts monthly.
- It is important to focus on school performance and remain in school until graduation. Sometimes the pressure to excel in school and too many extra-curricular activities can lead to a high level of stress, depression and anxiety.
- Chronic headaches, fatigue, sleeping problems and eating disorders can all be signs of stress, depression and anxiety.
- With guidance from parents, teachers and school counselors, seniors in high school need to plan for their future, whether enrolling in college or vocational school or finding employment.

In most cases, you will need a parent's permission to get medical care. However, you can see a doctor or nurse without parental permission for these confidential concerns:

- You think you might be pregnant.
- You need birth control.
- You think you have a sexually transmitted disease (STD).
- You need information about alcohol or other drug use.
- You want to talk about personal, school or family issues.

According to the laws of the State of Massachusetts, your doctor or nurse cannot tell your parents or guardians anything about your exam if you're seen for any confidential service. However, any bills you incur from your visit will go to your parents. These bills may list the specific services that were provided. Talk to your doctor if you have concerns about this. You can talk to your doctor about ANYTHING! Fill your doctor in if you:

- Have questions about your health
- Wonder about your growth, body size or weight
- Are having sex
- Are using tobacco, alcohol or drugs
- Have problems with friends, school or family
- Are scared for your safety

Even though you don't have to ask your parents, it's a good idea to talk with them or another adult you trust about the medical care you need. These are all very serious issues. A trusted adult can help you sort out your feelings and make a plan.

