18-21 Year Old Adolescent Visit

SCHOOL PERFORMANCE:

After high school completion, the older teen may be attending college, technical or vocational school, or entering the military or the work force.

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT:

The older adolescent establishes adult relationships and explores sexual identity. Teens may be living at home or in a college dorm or apartment. Increasing independence is important as teens enter adulthood. Throughout adolescence, teens should assume care of their own health care.

IMMUNIZATIONS:

Most older teens should be fully vaccinated. A booster dose of Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis, or "whooping cough"), a dose of meningococcal vaccine to protect against a certain type of bacterial meningitis, Hepatitis A, human papillomarvirus (HPV), chicken pox, or measles vaccines may be indicated, if not given at an earlier age. Annual influenza or "flu" vaccination should be considered during flu season.

TESTING:

Annual screening for vision and hearing problems is recommended. Vision should be screened objectively at least once between 18 and 21 years of age. The teen may be screened for anemia or tuberculosis. Teens should have a blood test to check for high cholesterol during this time period. Teens should be screened for use of alcohol and drugs. If the teenager is sexually active, screening for sexually transmitted infections, pregnancy, or HIV may be performed. Screening for cervical cancer should be performed within three years of beginning sexual activity.

NUTRITION AND ORAL HEALTH

- Adequate calcium intake is important. Take three servings of low fat milk and dairy products daily. For those who do not drink milk or consume dairy products, calcium enriched foods, such as juice, bread, or cereal; dark, green, leafy greens; or canned fish are alternate sources of calcium.
- Drink plenty of water. Limit fruit juice to 8 to 12 ounces per day. Avoid sugary beverages or sodas.
- Discourage skipping meals, especially breakfast. Teens should eat a good variety of vegetables and fruits, as well as lean meats.
- Avoid high fat, high salt and high sugar choices, such as candy, chips, and cookies.
- Encourage teenagers to participate in meal planning and preparation.
- Eat meals together as a family whenever possible. Encourage conversation at mealtime.
- Limit fast food choices and eating out at restaurants.
- Brush teeth twice a day and floss.
- Schedule dental examinations twice a year.

DEVELOPMENT

SLEEP

Regular sleep habits are important.

PHYSICAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- One hour of regular physical activity daily is recommended. Continue to participate in sports.
- Encourage young adults to develop their own interests and consider community service or volunteerism.
- Provide guidance to your older teen in making decisions about college and work plans.
- Make sure that teens know that they should never be in a situation that makes them uncomfortable, and they should tell partners if they do not want to engage in sexual activity.

- Talk to your teen about body image. Eating disorders may be noted at this time. Teens may also be concerned about being overweight. Monitor your teen for weight gain or loss.
- Mood disturbances, depression, anxiety, alcoholism, or attention problems may be noted in teenagers. Talk to your doctor if you or your teenager has concerns about mental illness.
- Negotiate limit setting and independent decision making.
- Encourage your teen to handle conflict without physical violence.
- Avoid loud noises which may impair hearing.
- **Limit television and computer time to 2 hours per day!** Individuals who engage in excessive sedentary activity are more likely to become overweight.

RISK BEHAVIORS

- Sexually active teens need to take precautions against pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections. Talk to teens about contraception.
- Provide a tobacco-free and drug-free environment for your teen. Talk to your teen about drug, tobacco, and alcohol use among friends or at friends' homes. Make sure your teen knows that smoking tobacco or marijuana and taking drugs have health consequences and may impact brain development.
- Teach your teens about appropriate use of other-the-counter or prescription medications.
- Establish guidelines for driving and for riding with friends.
- Talk to teens about the risks of drinking and driving or boating. Encourage your teen to call you if the teen or their friends have been drinking or using drugs.
- Remind teenagers to wear seatbelts at all times in cars and life vests in boats.
- Teens should always wear a properly fitted helmet when they are riding a bicycle.
- Use caution with use of all terrain vehicles (ATV) or other motorized vehicles.
- Do not keep handguns in the home. (If they are, the gun and ammunition should be locked separately and out of the teen's access).
- **Equip your home with smoke detectors and change the batteries regularly! Make sure that all family members know fire escape plans.**
- Teach teens not to swim alone and not to dive in shallow water.
- All individuals should wear sunscreen which protects against UV-A and UV-B and is at least sun protection factor of 15 (SPF-15) or higher when out in the sun to minimize sun burning.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Teenagers should visit their pediatrician or family physician yearly. By young adulthood, health care should be transitioned to a family physician or internal medicine specialist. Sexually active females may want to begin annual physical examinations with a gynecologist.

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