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[www.eastlouisvillepediatrics.com](http://www.eastlouisvillepediatrics.com)

## **Being Fourteen to Sixteen Years Old**

The years between 14 and 16 are very important ones full of many physical, emotional, and social changes for you. Many teenagers have lots of questions about their bodies and their health. We hope you will feel free to talk to us about any special concerns you may have.

As a teenager, you are now ready to assume more responsibility for your own health and well-being. The best way for you to do that is for you to be well informed. Below are a few suggestions we feel are important for you to think about. Remember, we are here to help you become the healthiest you can be!

### **Nutrition**

In general, you will need more food during these years because of how rapidly your body is growing and changing. Most teenagers have concerns about their bodies – either being too thin or too fat. Before you decide this let us review your growth chart. This will give you a better idea of if your weight is appropriate for your height. As you know, you need a balanced diet including servings from the following food groups: protein, carbohydrates, fruits, vegetables, and milk/dairy products. Please come talk to us before you try any diets, diet pills, or vitamins.

Two extreme issues in relation to nutrition are obesity and anorexia nervosa. Both can be extremely harmful to your health. If you feel you cannot stop eating or you cannot seem to stop dieting or losing weight please come talk to us.

### **Sleep**

Generally, 8 to 10 hours of sleep is recommended per night. However, everyone's sleep needs are different. How you feel the next day is a better guide. Learn to listen to your body.

### **Hair**

Shampoo your hair regularly. No shampoo can give you healthier hair. This comes only from a healthy person with a healthy diet. Dandruff usually can be controlled by using anti-dandruff shampoo once a



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week. If itching and flaking continues to bother you please make an appointment so we can examine your scalp.

### **Skin Care**

During these years changes are occurring in your skin. Oil glands are secreting more oil and sweat glands are more active. Two results which may be new for you are acne and increased perspiration. Some general suggestions include the following:

- ✓ Wash with mild soap and warm water.
- ✓ Use over the counter medications such as benzyl peroxide for mild acne.
- ✓ If your acne is severe please make an appointment with our office. If needed, we will refer you to a dermatologist.
- ✓ In general, you should avoid exposure to sunlight. Always use sunscreen.
- ✓ Do not expose your skin to ultraviolet light of sunlamps or commercial tanning beds. Both run the risk of increasing skin cancer.
- ✓ Use deodorant every day.

### **Dental**

Check-ups every 6 months are essential. The teeth you now have will remain with you the rest of your life. It is up to you to care for them! Proper cleansing by your dentist is necessary to remove the plaque which causes decay. You can do your part by brushing with a soft toothbrush and using dental floss daily. Uneven teeth, difficulty with chewing and biting, bleeding gums, and bad breath are all issues we can discuss with you.



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## **Exercise**

Leading a life without vigorous exercise is bad for your health. Your heart and other muscles cannot remain strong if you sit all day reading, playing video games, watching TV, or using other electronic media. You must exercise vigorously at least three times a day. Walking, jogging, swimming, and tennis all strengthen your heart and lungs. NOW is a great time to develop a lifelong habit of exercise. Let exercise be your friend and get moving!

## **Healthcare**

We recommend a physical exam every year. At this time your overall health will be evaluated. Routine blood work may be done and your immunizations will be updated as needed. We respect your growing need for privacy and will be happy to see you without your parents.

## **Health Issues**

As a teenager there are many health issues you need to know about. Most are much too complex to discuss here but we have included a list of topics for your review. If you have any questions or need further information on any of these issues please talk with us and we will help provide you with the answers. The following provides a list of topics that often come up during the physical and emotional changes in teenagers:

- ✓ Gynecomastia (normal mild breast development in males)
- ✓ Scoliosis
- ✓ High blood pressure
- ✓ Obesity
- ✓ Anorexia nervosa
- ✓ Depression



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- ✓ Drug abuse
- ✓ Pregnancy
- ✓ Sexually transmitted infections
- ✓ Sexual trauma

If you take more responsibility for your own health these can be great years ahead – so begin today! Remember, it takes guts to say “NO!” to things that harm your health. Decide how you want to keep your body, mind, heart, and soul healthy and say a firm “NO!” to people or substances that try to persuade you otherwise.

### **Suggested Reading**

**NEXT CHECKUP: YEARLY**