



Development & Behavior

You have progressed through transformations in the physical, cognitive, emotional, and social aspects. These experiences have prepared you for the transition to adulthood. You have developed a sense of self-identity, a conscience, and you have developed moral, religious and sexual values. Research shows that cognitively you will continue to develop into the 3rd decade despite society seeing you as a legal adult. It is important to stay connected to your family. Discuss with your family any problems that may arise. As you leave high school and begin a new life, you may find you drift away from some of your old friends. This is a normal part of your transition to adulthood.

You should have learned conflict-resolution, and this will continue to be needed. Manage conflict nonviolently, walk away if necessary. Avoid risky situations and violent people. Leave a relationship if there are signs of violence. Confide in your parents, health care professionals, or other trusted adults if anyone bullies, stalks, or abuses you. You can also call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 800-799-SAFE (7233). When dating, No means No. Healthy dating relationships are built on respect, concern, and doing things that are mutually interesting. Be thoughtful about the potential hurtful effects on others in your social media and texting. Be true to your values of respect and kindness in all posts.

Most people your age experience ups and downs. You will have great days but also will experience failures and bad days. It is important to determine how best to deal with stress. At this age you are at a high risk for mental health problems. The most common problems people at this age experience are depression, anxiety, learning disorders, attention-deficit disorders, and other behavioral disorders like conduct disorders. The temptation to partake in risky behaviors is high. Even with ups and downs you should figure out how to do things you enjoy, have good relationships with friends and family, have goals for the future, and stick to your values. If you feel like you are experiencing any of the above, please discuss this with us. If you have become depressed and feel it is worsening or are suicidal, please call us or your mental health provider immediately, call 911, go to the ER or the Crisis Response Center (open 24/7, 301-2400), or call/text the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 988.

There are community agencies that have expertise in housing issues if needed, as well as resources available to help you and your family if you are eligible for food and nutritional programs.

Sexuality

Adults who identify themselves as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or who are questioning their sexuality face unique challenges with family and mainstream culture. This may cause significant stress. Realize health care professionals as well as community support systems are available as a confidential resource to help you. Please ask us if you have any questions or would like to discuss these issues.

If you are sexually active, protect yourself and your partner(s) from pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STI's) by correctly and consistently using contraceptives along with a condom. Consider using a long-active reversible contraceptive such as an IUD or contraceptive implant. Be careful with alcohol and drug use as they can lead to otherwise unwanted and risky sexual behavior and avoid risky places and relationships.

School & Career

It is important to finish high school or if you have dropped out to obtain a high school equivalency certificate (GED). You may be entering into college or trade school, starting a job, or joining the military. Gap years are increasing in popularity. Continue to arrive at school or your job well fed and rested in order to learn and perform better. Aim to get at least 7 to 9 hours of sleep. Lack of appropriate sleep can lead to decreased performance, increase in depression and other mental health disorders, and health risk behaviors.

Diet

Every day it is important to eat a healthy breakfast. Studies have shown eating breakfast improves academic performance and people who eat breakfast have a lower BMI (healthy weight for height). It is important to choose healthy foods and maintain physical activity to maintain a healthy weight. Eat 3 healthy meals a day. Pick healthy lunches from school or work or pack a lunch. Get enough protein from foods like chicken, fish, lean meat, eggs, legumes, nuts and seeds. Examples of nutritious foods include: vegetables; fruits; whole grains; and low-fat or non-fat dairy products. Limit food and drinks high in calories, fats, sugars and refined grains which are low in nutrients. Examples of low nutritious foods include: ice cream; baked goods; salty snacks; fast food; pizza; soda; Gatorade/power-aide; and other sweetened beverages. It is important you get adequate calcium and Vitamin D. 20-24 oz of low-fat or fat-free milk a day plus an additional serving of low-fat yogurt or cheese is recommended. If you do not drink milk or other dairy products then aim for foods and beverages fortified with calcium and Vitamin D. Drink plenty of water throughout the day. Drink water or low-fat milk over juice, fruit drinks, soda, vitamin waters, sports and energy drinks or caffeinated beverages.

Media

Inappropriate or excessive media use has been associated with attention problems, impaired sleep, school difficulties, vision changes, and obesity. Any media exposure should be limited to 90 minutes per day and be of good quality. Turn off devices during meals and do not snack while on a device. There are inappropriate or dangerous times to use smartphones or handheld devices, such as while walking and especially driving. Current recommendations are for you to engage in 150 minutes of moderate intensity exercise or 75 minutes of vigorous intensity physical activity per day. Physical activity is essential to maintain a healthy weight.

Oral health

Use a soft toothbrush with a pea-sized amount of fluoridated toothpaste twice a day. Aim for 2 minutes per day with flossing once a day. You should be following with a dentist every 6 months. Limit your consumption of sweetened beverages and snacks with sugar. If you play contact sports, wear a mouthguard.

Safety

Exposure to secondhand smoke greatly increases the risk of heart and lung diseases as well as being one of the most addictive products. For your health, please stop smoking. Vapor from e-cigarettes may also be harmful, so avoid secondhand exposure. If you are interested in quitting speak with us or a toll-free smoking helpline (1-800-QUIT-NOW).

You are exposed to drinking, smoking, and drug use behaviors through TV, movies, and other media as well as besides your peers. Do not drink alcohol, use drugs, anabolic steroids, or diet pills. Avoid situations in which drugs and alcohol are readily available. Smoking marijuana and other drugs can hurt your lungs. Alcohol and drugs are bad for brain development. Alcohol poisoning is a serious and sometimes deadly consequence of drinking large quantities of alcohol in a short period of time. If you think someone has alcohol poisoning call immediately for medical help. Choose friends who support your decision not to use tobacco, drugs, and alcohol and support those friends who also abstaining. If you are using drugs, alcohol, or prescriptions not prescribed to you please discuss this with us. Never drink alcohol or use drugs when driving, swimming, boating, riding a bike or motorcycle, or operating equipment.

The CDC recommends avoiding or limiting exposure to excessively loud sounds to protect hearing. This includes turning down the volume of music systems, moving away for sources of loud sounds when possible, and using hearing protection devices. Keep the volume at a reasonable level when using earbuds, usually so that you can hear conversations.

You should wear a seat belt while in the car. A helmet is recommended for bikes, motorcycles, and ATV's. Do not put the car in drive until everyone is buckled in, do not drive under the influence of drugs or alcohol, and do not text or use mobile devices while driving. Turn off your phone while driving so you are not tempted to respond to texts. Do not ride in a vehicle with someone who has been using drugs or alcohol.

Sun protection is still important at this age. Sun protection can be accomplished by limiting sun exposure, using sunscreen, and wearing sun protective clothing including sunglasses and hats. Avoid tanning parlors, which increase skin cancer risk. US Coast Guard- approved life jackets should be used if engaged in water sports.

What to expect at this visit

A depression and substance abuse screen should be completed before this visit. We ask you to complete a screening for social determinants of health form to provide the best care for you. Please let us know of any family history of high cholesterol, diabetes, or heart disease. We will screen cholesterol between 18–21, more often if indicated. If you are a vegetarian, vegan, or have other limitations of iron in your diet please let us know so we can perform a blood test to check for anemia. At this age we will screen you for HIV and sexually transmitted infections if indicated. Tdap will be given at 21. Meningococcal B vaccination may be given for those heading off to college or military if desired. Flu and COVID may be given at this visit, if in season.

Tdap



Meningococcal B



Influenza Injection



Nasal Influenza



COVID

