

Positive Parenting Tips for Healthy Child Development

Infants (0-1 year of age)

Developmental Milestones

Skills such as taking a first step, smiling for the first time, and waving "bye-bye" are called developmental milestones. Developmental milestones are things most children can do by a certain age. Children reach milestones in how they play, learn, speak, behave, and move (like crawling, walking, or jumping).

In the first year, babies learn to focus their vision, reach out, explore, and learn about the things that are around them. Cognitive, or brain development means the learning process of memory, language, thinking, and reasoning. Learning language is more than making sounds ("babble"), or saying "ma-ma" and "da-da". Listening, understanding, and knowing the names of people and things are all a part of language development. During this stage, babies also are developing bonds of love and trust with their parents and others as part of social and emotional development. The way parents cuddle, hold, and play with their baby will set the basis for how they will interact with them and others.

For more details on developmental milestones, warning signs of possible developmental delays, and information on how to help your child's development, visit the "Learn the Signs. Act Early." campaign website.

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/index.html>

Positive Parenting Tips

Following are some things you, as a parent, can do to help your baby during this time:

- Talk to your baby. She will find your voice calming.
- Answer when your baby makes sounds by repeating the sounds and adding words. This will help him learn to use language.
- Read to your baby. This will help her develop and understand language and sounds.
- Sing to your baby and play music. This will help your baby develop a love for music and will help his brain development.
- Praise your baby and give her lots of loving attention.
- Spend time cuddling and holding your baby. This will help him feel cared for and secure.
- Play with your baby when she's alert and relaxed. Watch your baby closely for signs of being tired or fussy so that she can take a break from playing.
- Distract your baby with toys and move him to safe areas when he starts moving and touching things that he shouldn't touch.
- Take care of yourself physically, mentally, and emotionally. Parenting can be hard work! It is easier to enjoy your new baby and be a positive, loving parent when you are feeling good yourself.



Child Safety First

When a baby becomes part of your family, it is time to make sure that your home is a safe place. Look around your home for things that could be dangerous to your baby. As a parent, it is your job to ensure that you create a safe home for your baby. It also is important that you take the necessary steps to make sure that you are mentally and emotionally ready for your new baby. Here are a few tips to keep your baby safe:

- Do not shake your baby—*ever*! Babies have very weak neck muscles that are not yet able to support their heads. If you shake your baby, you can damage his brain or even cause his death.
- Make sure you always put your baby to sleep on her back to prevent sudden infant death syndrome (commonly known as SIDS).
- Protect your baby and family from secondhand smoke. Do not allow anyone to smoke in your home.
- Place your baby in a rear-facing car seat in the back seat while he is riding in a car. This is recommended by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.
- Prevent your baby from choking by cutting her food into small bites. Also, don't let her play with small toys and other things that might be easy for her to swallow.
- Don't allow your baby to play with anything that might cover her face.
- Never carry hot liquids or foods near your baby or while holding him.
- Vaccines (shots) are important to protect your child's health and safety. Because children can get serious diseases, it is important that your child get the right shots at the right time. Talk with your child's doctor to make sure that your child is up-to-date on her vaccinations.

Healthy Bodies

- Breast milk meets all your baby's needs for about the first 6 months of life. Between 6 and 12 months of age, your baby will learn about new tastes and textures with healthy solid food, but breast milk should still be an important source of nutrition.
- Feed your baby slowly and patiently, encourage your baby to try new tastes but without force, and watch closely to see if he's still hungry.
- Breastfeeding is the natural way to feed your baby, but it can be challenging. If you need help, you can call the National Breastfeeding Helpline at 800-994-9662 or get help on-line at <http://www.womenshealth.gov/breastfeeding>. You can also call your local WIC Program to see if you qualify for breastfeeding support by health professionals as well as peer counselors. Or go to <http://gotwww.net/ilca> to find an International Board-Certified Lactation Consultant in your community.
- Keep your baby active. She might not be able to run and play like the "big kids" just yet, but there's lots she can do to keep her little arms and legs moving throughout the day. Getting down on the floor to move helps your baby become strong, learn, and explore.
- Try not to keep your baby in swings, strollers, bouncer seats, and exercise saucers for too long.
- Limit screen time to a minimum. For children younger than 2 years of age, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that it's best if babies do not watch any screen media.

A pdf of this document for reprinting is available free of charge from

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/childdevelopment/positiveparenting/infants.html>

Additional Information:

<http://www.cdc.gov/childdevelopment>

1-800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636) <http://www.cdc.gov/info>

Positive Parenting Tips for Healthy Child Development

Toddlers (1-2 years of age)

Developmental Milestones

Skills such as taking a first step, smiling for the first time, and waving "bye-bye" are called developmental milestones. Developmental milestones are things most children can do by a certain age. Children reach milestones in how they play, learn, speak, behave, and move (like crawling, walking, or jumping).

During the second year, toddlers are moving around more, and are aware of themselves and their surroundings. Their desire to explore new objects and people also is increasing. During this stage, toddlers will show greater independence; begin to show defiant behavior; recognize themselves in pictures or a mirror; and imitate the behavior of others, especially adults and older children. Toddlers also should be able to recognize the names of familiar people and objects, form simple phrases and sentences, and follow simple instructions and directions.

For more details on developmental milestones, warning signs of possible developmental delays, and information on how to help your child's development, visit the "Learn the Signs. Act Early." campaign website.

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/index.html>

Positive Parenting Tips

Following are some things you, as a parent, can do to help your toddler during this time:

- Read to your toddler daily.
- Ask her to find objects for you or name body parts and objects.
- Play matching games with your toddler, like shape sorting and simple puzzles.
- Encourage him to explore and try new things.
- Help to develop your toddler's language by talking with her and adding to words she starts. For example, if your toddler says "baba", you can respond, "Yes, you are right—that is a *bottle*."
- Encourage your child's growing independence by letting him help with dressing himself and feeding himself.
- Respond to wanted behaviors more than you punish unwanted behaviors (use only very brief time outs). Always tell or show your child what she should do instead.
- Encourage your toddler's curiosity and ability to recognize common objects by taking field trips together to the park or going on a bus ride.



Child Safety First

Because your child is moving around more, he will come across more dangers as well. Dangerous situations can happen quickly, so keep a close eye on your child. Here are a few tips to help keep your growing toddler safe:

- Do NOT leave your toddler near or around water (for example, bathtubs, pools, ponds, lakes, whirlpools, or the ocean) without someone watching her. Fence off backyard pools. Drowning is the leading cause of injury and death among this age group.
- Block off stairs with a small gate or fence. Lock doors to dangerous places such as the garage or basement.
- Ensure that your home is toddler proof by placing plug covers on all unused electrical outlets.
- Keep kitchen appliances, irons, and heaters out of reach of your toddler. Turn pot handles toward the back of the stove.
- Keep sharp objects such as scissors, knives, and pens in a safe place.
- Lock up medicines, household cleaners, and poisons.
- Do NOT leave your toddler alone in any vehicle (that means a car, truck, or van) even for a few moments.
- Store any guns in a safe place out of his reach.
- Keep your child's car seat rear-facing as long as possible. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, it's the best way to keep her safe. Your child should remain in a rear-facing car seat until she reaches the top height or weight limit allowed by the car seat's manufacturer. Once your child outgrows the rear-facing car seat, she is ready to travel in a forward-facing car seat with a harness.

Healthy Bodies

- Give your child water and plain milk instead of sugary drinks. After the first year, when your nursing toddler is eating more and different solid foods, breast milk is still an ideal addition to his diet.
- Your toddler might become a very picky and erratic eater. Toddlers need less food because they don't grow as fast. It's best not to battle with him over this. Offer a selection of healthy foods and let him choose what she wants. Keep trying new foods; it might take time for him to learn to like them.
- Limit screen time. For children younger than 2 years of age, the AAP recommends that it's best if toddlers not watch any screen media.
- Your toddler will seem to be moving continually—running, kicking, climbing, or jumping. Let him be active—he's developing his coordination and becoming strong.

A pdf of this document for reprinting is available free of charge from

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/childdevelopment/positiveparenting/toddlers.html>

Additional Information:

<http://www.cdc.gov/childdevelopment>

1-800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636) <http://www.cdc.gov/info>

Positive Parenting Tips for Healthy Child Development

Toddlers (2-3 years of age)

Developmental Milestones

Skills such as taking turns, playing make believe, and kicking a ball, are called developmental milestones. Developmental milestones are things most children can do by a certain age. Children reach milestones in how they play, learn, speak, behave, and move (like jumping, running, or balancing).

Because of children's growing desire to be independent, this stage is often called the "terrible twos." However, this can be an exciting time for parents and toddlers. Toddlers will experience huge thinking, learning, social, and emotional changes that will help them to explore their new world, and make sense of it. During this stage, toddlers should be able to follow two- or three-step directions, sort objects by shape and color, imitate the actions of adults and playmates, and express a wide range of emotions.

For more details on developmental milestones, warning signs of possible developmental delays, and information on how to help your child's development, visit the "Learn the Signs. Act Early." campaign website.

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/index.html>

Positive Parenting Tips

Following are some things you, as a parent, can do to help your toddler during this time:

- Set up a special time to read books with your toddler.
- Encourage your child to take part in pretend play.
- Play parade or follow the leader with your toddler.
- Help your child to explore things around her by taking her on a walk or wagon ride.
- Encourage your child to tell you his name and age.
- Teach your child simple songs like Itsy Bitsy Spider, or other cultural childhood rhymes.
- Give your child attention and praise when she follows instructions and shows positive behavior and limit attention for defiant behavior like tantrums. Teach your child acceptable ways to show that she's upset.



Child Safety First

Because your child is moving around more, he will come across more dangers as well. Dangerous situations can happen quickly, so keep a close eye on your child. Here are a few tips to help keep your growing toddler safe:

- Do NOT leave your toddler near or around water (for example, bathtubs, pools, ponds, lakes, whirlpools, or the ocean) without someone watching her. Fence off backyard pools. Drowning is the leading cause of injury and death among this age group.
- Encourage your toddler to sit when eating and to chew his food thoroughly to prevent choking.
- Check toys often for loose or broken parts.
- Encourage your toddler not to put pencils or crayons in her mouth when coloring or drawing.
- Do NOT hold hot drinks while your child is sitting on your lap. Sudden movements can cause a spill and might result in your child's being burned.
- Make sure that your child sits in the back seat and is buckled up properly in a car seat with a harness.

Healthy Bodies

- Talk with staff at your child care provider to see if they serve healthier foods and drinks, and if they limit television and other screen time.
- Your toddler might change what food she likes from day to day. It's normal behavior, and it's best not to make an issue of it. Encourage her to try new foods by offering her small bites to taste.
- Keep television sets out of your child's bedroom. Limit screen time, including video and electronic games, to no more than 1 to 2 hours per day.
- Encourage free play as much as possible. It helps your toddler stay active and strong and helps him develop motor skills.

A pdf of this document for reprinting is available free of charge from

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/childdevelopment/positiveparenting/toddlers2.html>

Additional Information:

<http://www.cdc.gov/childdevelopment>

1-800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636) <http://www.cdc.gov/info>

Positive Parenting Tips for Healthy Child Development

Preschoolers (3-5 years of age)

Developmental Milestones

Skills such as naming colors, showing affection, and hopping on one foot are called developmental milestones. Developmental milestones are things most children can do by a certain age. Children reach milestones in how they play, learn, speak, behave, and move (like crawling, walking, or jumping).

As children grow into early childhood, their world will begin to open up. They will become more independent and begin to focus more on adults and children outside of the family. They will want to explore and ask about the things around them even more. Their interactions with family and those around them will help to shape their personality and their own ways of thinking and moving. During this stage, children should be able to ride a tricycle, use safety scissors, notice a difference between girls and boys, help to dress and undress themselves, play with other children, recall part of a story, and sing a song.

For more details on developmental milestones, warning signs of possible developmental delays, and information on how to help your child's development, visit the "Learn the Signs. Act Early." campaign website.

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/index.html>

Positive Parenting Tips

Following are some things you, as a parent, can do to help your preschooler during this time:

- Continue to read to your child. Nurture her love for books by taking her to the library or bookstore.
- Let your child help with simple chores.
- Encourage your child to play with other children. This helps him to learn the value of sharing and friendship.
- Be clear and consistent when disciplining your child. Explain and show the behavior that you expect from her. Whenever you tell her no, follow up with what he should be doing instead.
- Help your child develop good language skills by speaking to him in complete sentences and using "grown up" words. Help him to use the correct words and phrases.
- Help your child through the steps to solve problems when she is upset.
- Give your child a limited number of simple choices (for example, deciding what to wear, when to play, and what to eat for snack).



Child Safety First

As your child becomes more independent and spends more time in the outside world, it is important that you and your child are aware of ways to stay safe. Here are a few tips to protect your child:

- Tell your child why it is important to stay out of traffic. Tell him not to play in the street or run after stray balls.
- Be cautious when letting your child ride her tricycle. Keep her on the sidewalk and away from the street and always have her wear a helmet.
- Check outdoor playground equipment. Make sure there are no loose parts or sharp edges.
- Watch your child at all times, especially when he is playing outside.
- Be safe in the water. Teach your child to swim, but watch her at all times when she is in or around any body of water (this includes kiddie pools).
- Teach your child how to be safe around strangers.
- Keep your child in a forward-facing car seat with a harness until he reaches the top height or weight limit allowed by the car seat's manufacturer. Once your child outgrows the forward-facing car seat with a harness, it will be time for him to travel in a booster seat, but still in the back seat of the vehicle. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has information on how to keep your child safe while riding in a vehicle.

Healthy Bodies

- Eat meals with your child whenever possible. Let your child see you enjoying fruits, vegetables, and whole grains at meals and snacks. Your child should eat and drink only a limited amount of food and beverages that contain added sugars, solid fats, or salt.
- Limit screen time for your child to no more than 1 to 2 hours per day of quality programming, at home, school, or child care.
- Provide your child with age-appropriate play equipment, like balls and plastic bats, but let your preschooler choose what to play. This makes moving and being active fun for your preschooler.

A pdf of this document for reprinting is available free of charge from

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/childdevelopment/positiveparenting/preschoolers.html>

Additional Information:

<http://www.cdc.gov/childdevelopment>

1-800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636) <http://www.cdc.gov/info>

Positive Parenting Tips for Healthy Child Development

Middle Childhood (6-8 years of age)

Developmental Milestones

Middle childhood brings many changes in a child's life. By this time, children can dress themselves, catch a ball more easily using only their hands, and tie their shoes. Having independence from family becomes more important now. Events such as starting school bring children this age into regular contact with the larger world. Friendships become more and more important. Physical, social, and mental skills develop quickly at this time. This is a critical time for children to develop confidence in all areas of life, such as through friends, schoolwork, and sports.

Here is some information on how children develop during middle childhood:

Emotional/Social Changes

Children in this age group might:

- Show more independence from parents and family.
- Start to think about the future.
- Understand more about his or her place in the world.
- Pay more attention to friendships and teamwork.
- Want to be liked and accepted by friends.

Thinking and Learning

Children in this age group might:

- Show rapid development of mental skills.
- Learn better ways to describe experiences and talk about thoughts and feelings.
- Have less focus on one's self and more concern for others.

Positive Parenting Tips

Following are some things you, as a parent, can do to help your child during this time:

- Show affection for your child. Recognize her accomplishments.
- Help your child develop a sense of responsibility—ask him to help with household tasks, such as setting the table.
- Talk with your child about school, friends, and things she looks forward to in the future.
- Talk with your child about respecting others. Encourage him to help people in need.
- Help your child set her own achievable goals—she'll learn to take pride in herself and rely less on approval or reward from others.
- Help your child learn patience by letting others go first or by finishing a task before going out to play. Encourage him to think about possible consequences before acting.
- Make clear rules and stick to them, such as how long your child can watch TV or when she has to go to bed. Be clear about what behavior is okay and what is not okay.
- Do fun things together as a family, such as playing games, reading, and going to events in your community.



- Get involved with your child's school. Meet the teachers and staff and get to understand their learning goals and how you and the school can work together to help your child do well.
- Continue reading to your child. As your child learns to read, take turns reading to each other.
- Use discipline to guide and protect your child, rather than punishment to make him feel bad about himself. Follow up any discussion about what *not* to do with a discussion of what *to* do instead.
- Praise your child for good behavior. It's best to focus praise more on what your child does ("you worked hard to figure this out") than on traits she can't change ("you are smart").
- Support your child in taking on new challenges. Encourage her to solve problems, such as a disagreement with another child, on her own.
- Encourage your child to join school and community groups, such as a team sports, or to take advantage of volunteer opportunities.

Child Safety First

More physical ability and more independence can put children at risk for injuries from falls and other accidents. Motor vehicle crashes are the most common cause of death from unintentional injury among children this age.

- Protect your child properly in the car. For detailed information, see the American Academy of Pediatrics' Car Safety Seats: A Guide for Families.
- Teach your child to watch out for traffic and how to be safe when walking to school, riding a bike, and playing outside.
- Make sure your child understands water safety, and always supervise her when she's swimming or playing near water.
- Supervise your child when he's engaged in risky activities, such as climbing.
- Talk with your child about how to ask for help when she needs it.
- Keep potentially harmful household products, tools, equipment, and firearms out of your child's reach.

Healthy Bodies

- Parents can help make schools healthier. Work with your child's school to limit access to foods and drinks with added sugar, solid fat, and salt that can be purchased outside the school lunch program.
- Make sure your child has 1 hour or more of physical activity each day.
- Limit screen time for your child to no more than 1 to 2 hours per day of quality programming, at home, school, or afterschool care.
- Practice healthy eating habits and physical activity early. Encourage active play, and be a role model by eating healthy at family mealtimes and having an active lifestyle.

A pdf of this document for reprinting is available free of charge from

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/childdevelopment/positiveparenting/middle.html>

Additional Information:

<http://www.cdc.gov/childdevelopment>

1-800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636) <http://www.cdc.gov/info>

Positive Parenting Tips for Healthy Child Development

Middle Childhood (9-11 years of age)

Developmental Milestones

Your child's growing independence from the family and interest in friends might be obvious by now. Healthy friendships are very important to your child's development, but peer pressure can become strong during this time. Children who feel good about themselves are more able to resist negative peer pressure and make better choices for themselves. This is an important time for children to gain a sense of responsibility along with their growing independence. Also, physical changes of puberty might be showing by now, especially for girls. Another big change children need to prepare for during this time is starting middle or junior high school.

Here is some information on how children develop during middle childhood:

Emotional/Social Changes

Children in this age group might:

- Start to form stronger, more complex friendships and peer relationships. It becomes more emotionally important to have friends, especially of the same sex.
- Experience more peer pressure.
- Become more aware of his or her body as puberty approaches. Body image and eating problems sometimes start around this age.

Thinking and Learning

Children in this age group might:

- Face more academic challenges at school.
- Become more independent from the family.
- Begin to see the point of view of others more clearly.
- Have an increased attention span.

Positive Parenting Tips

Following are some things you, as a parent, can do to help your child during this time:

- Spend time with your child. Talk with her about her friends, her accomplishments, and what challenges she will face.
- Be involved with your child's school. Go to school events; meet your child's teachers.
- Encourage your child to join school and community groups, such as a sports team, or to be a volunteer for a charity.
- Help your child develop his own sense of right and wrong. Talk with him about risky things friends might pressure him to do, like smoking or dangerous physical dares.
- Help your child develop a sense of responsibility—involve your child in household tasks like cleaning and cooking. Talk with your child about saving and spending money wisely.
- Meet the families of your child's friends.
- Talk with your child about respecting others. Encourage her to help people in need. Talk with her about what to do when others are not kind or are disrespectful.



- Help your child set his own goals. Encourage him to think about skills and abilities he would like to have and about how to develop them.
- Make clear rules and stick to them. Talk with your child about what you expect from her (behavior) when no adults are present. If you provide reasons for rules, it will help her to know what to do in most situations.
- Use discipline to guide and protect your child, instead of punishment to make him feel badly about himself.
- When using praise, help your child think about her own accomplishments. Saying "you must be proud of yourself" rather than simply "I'm proud of you" can encourage your child to make good choices when nobody is around to praise her.
- Talk with your child about the normal physical and emotional changes of puberty.
- Encourage your child to read every day. Talk with him about his homework.
- Be affectionate and honest with your child, and do things together as a family.

Child Safety First

More independence and less adult supervision can put children at risk for injuries from falls and other accidents. Here are a few tips to help protect your child:

- Protect your child in the car. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration recommends that you keep your child in a booster seat until he is big enough to fit in a seat belt properly. Remember: your child should still ride in the back seat until he or she is 12 years of age because it's safer there. Motor vehicle crashes are the most common cause of death from unintentional injury among children of this age.
- Know where your child is and whether a responsible adult is present. Make plans with your child for when he will call you, where you can find him, and what time you expect him home.
- Make sure your child wears a helmet when riding a bike or a skateboard or using inline skates; riding on a motorcycle, snowmobile, or all-terrain vehicle; or playing contact sports.
- Many children get home from school before their parents get home from work. It is important to have clear rules and plans for your child when she is home alone.

Healthy Bodies

- Provide plenty of fruits and vegetables; limit foods high in solid fats, added sugars, or salt, and prepare healthier foods for family meals.
- Keep television sets out of your child's bedroom. Limit screen time, including computers and video games, to no more than 1 to 2 hours.
- Encourage your child to participate in an hour a day of physical activities that are age appropriate and enjoyable and that offer variety! Just make sure your child is doing three types of activity: aerobic activity like running, muscle strengthening like climbing, and bone strengthening – like jumping rope – at least three days per week.

A pdf of this document for reprinting is available free of charge from

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/childdevelopment/positiveparenting/middle2.html>

Additional Information:

<http://www.cdc.gov/childdevelopment>

1-800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636) <http://www.cdc.gov/info>

Positive Parenting Tips for Healthy Child Development

Young Teens (12-14 years of age)

Developmental Milestones

This is a time of many physical, mental, emotional, and social changes. Hormones change as puberty begins. Most boys grow facial and pubic hair and their voices deepen. Most girls grow pubic hair and breasts, and start their period. They might be worried about these changes and how they are looked at by others. This also will be a time when your teen might face peer pressure to use alcohol, tobacco products, and drugs, and to have sex. Other challenges can be eating disorders, depression, and family problems. At this age, teens make more of their own choices about friends, sports, studying, and school. They become more independent, with their own personality and interests, although parents are still very important.

Here is some information on how young teens develop:

Emotional/Social Changes

Children in this age group might:

- Show more concern about body image, looks, and clothes.
- Focus on themselves; going back and forth between high expectations and lack of confidence.
- Experience more moodiness.
- Show more interest in and influence by peer group.
- Express less affection toward parents; sometimes might seem rude or short-tempered.
- Feel stress from more challenging school work.
- Develop eating problems.
- Feel a lot of sadness or depression, which can lead to poor grades at school, alcohol or drug use, unsafe sex, and other problems.



Thinking and Learning

Children in this age group might:

- Have more ability for complex thought.
- Be better able to express feelings through talking.
- Develop a stronger sense of right and wrong.

Positive Parenting Tips

Following are some things you, as a parent, can do to help your child during this time:

- Be honest and direct with your teen when talking about sensitive subjects such as drugs, drinking, smoking, and sex.
- Meet and get to know your teen's friends.
- Show an interest in your teen's school life.
- Help your teen make healthy choices while encouraging him to make his own decisions.

- Respect your teen's opinions and take into account her thoughts and feelings. It is important that she knows you are listening to her.
- When there is a conflict, be clear about goals and expectations (like getting good grades, keeping things clean, and showing respect), but allow your teen input on how to reach those goals (like when and how to study or clean).

Child Safety First

You play an important role in keeping your child safe—no matter how old he or she is. Here are a few tips to help protect your child:

- Make sure your teen knows about the importance of wearing seatbelts. Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death among 12- to 14-year-olds.
- Encourage your teen to wear a helmet when riding a bike or a skateboard or using inline skates; riding on a motorcycle, snowmobile, or all-terrain vehicle; or playing contact sports. Injuries from sports and other activities are common.
- Talk with your teen about the dangers of drugs, drinking, smoking, and risky sexual activity. Ask him what he knows and thinks about these issues, and share your thoughts and feelings with him. Listen to what she says and answer her questions honestly and directly.
- Talk with your teen about the importance of having friends who are interested in positive activities. Encourage her to avoid peers who pressure her to make unhealthy choices.
- Know where your teen is and whether an adult is present. Make plans with him for when he will call you, where you can find him, and what time you expect him home.
- Set clear rules for your teen when she is home alone. Talk about such issues as having friends at the house, how to handle situations that can be dangerous (emergencies, fire, drugs, sex, etc.), and completing homework or household tasks.

Healthy Bodies

- Encourage your teen to be physically active. She might join a team sport or take up an individual sport. Helping with household tasks such as mowing the lawn, walking the dog, or washing the car also will keep your teen active.
- Meal time is very important for families. Eating together helps teens make better choices about the foods they eat, promotes healthy weight, and gives your family members time to talk with each other.
- Limit screen time for your child to no more than 1 to 2 hours per day of quality programming, at home, school, or afterschool care.

A pdf of this document for reprinting is available free of charge from

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/childdevelopment/positiveparenting/adolescence.html>

Additional Information:

<http://www.cdc.gov/childdevelopment>

1-800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636) <http://www.cdc.gov/info>

Positive Parenting Tips for Healthy Child Development

Teenagers (15-17 years of age)

Developmental Milestones

This is a time of changes for how teenagers think, feel, and interact with others, and how their bodies grow. Most girls will be physically mature by now, and most will have completed puberty. Boys might still be maturing physically during this time. Your teen might have concerns about her body size, shape, or weight. Eating disorders also can be common, especially among girls. During this time, your teen is developing his unique personality and opinions. Relationships with friends are still important, yet your teen will have other interests as he develops a more clear sense of who he is. This is also an important time to prepare for more independence and responsibility; many teenagers start working, and many will be leaving home soon after high school.

Here is some information on how teens develop:

Emotional/Social Changes

Children in this age group might:

- Have more interest in romantic relationships and sexuality.
- Go through less conflict with parents.
- Show more independence from parents.
- Have a deeper capacity for caring and sharing and for developing more intimate relationships.
- Spend less time with parents and more time with friends.
- Feel a lot of sadness or depression, which can lead to poor grades at school, alcohol or drug use, unsafe sex, and other problems.

Thinking and Learning

Children in this age group might:

- Learn more defined work habits.
- Show more concern about future school and work plans.
- Be better able to give reasons for their own choices, including about what is right or wrong.



Positive Parenting Tips

Following are some things you, as a parent, can do to help your teen during this time:

- Talk with your teen about her concerns and pay attention to any changes in her behavior. Ask her if she has had suicidal thoughts, particularly if she seems sad or depressed. Asking about suicidal thoughts will not cause her to have these thoughts, but it will let her know that you care about how she feels. Seek professional help if necessary.
- Show interest in your teen's school and extracurricular interests and activities and encourage him to become involved in activities such as sports, music, theater, and art.
- Encourage your teen to volunteer and become involved in civic activities in her community.
- Compliment your teen and celebrate his efforts and accomplishments.
- Show affection for your teen. Spend time together doing things you enjoy.

- Respect your teen's opinion. Listen to her without playing down her concerns.
- Encourage your teen to develop solutions to problems or conflicts. Help your teenager learn to make good decisions. Create opportunities for him to use his own judgment, and be available for advice and support.
- If your teen engages in interactive internet media such as games, chat rooms, and instant messaging, encourage her to make good decisions about what she posts and the amount of time she spends on these activities.
- If your teen works, use the opportunity to talk about expectations, responsibilities, and other ways of behaving respectfully in a public setting.
- Talk with your teen and help him plan ahead for difficult or uncomfortable situations. Discuss what he can do if he is in a group and someone is using drugs or under pressure to have sex, or is offered a ride by someone who has been drinking.
- Respect your teen's need for privacy.
- Encourage your teen to get enough sleep and exercise, and to eat healthy, balanced meals.
- Encourage your teen to have meals with the family. Eating together will help your teen make better choices about the foods she eats, promote healthy weight, and give family members time to talk with each other. In addition, a teen who eats meals with the family is more likely to have better grades and less likely to smoke, drink, or use drugs. She is also less likely to get into fights, think about suicide, or engage in sexual activity.

Child Safety First

You play an important role in keeping your child safe—no matter how old he or she is. Here are a few tips to help protect your child:

- Talk with your teen about the dangers of driving and how to be safe on the road. You can steer your teen in the right direction. CDC's "Parents Are the Key" campaign has steps that can help. Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death from unintentional injury among teens, yet few teens take measures to reduce their risk of injury.
- Remind your teen to wear a helmet when riding a bike, motorcycle, or all-terrain vehicle. Unintentional injuries resulting from participation in sports and other activities are common.
- Talk with your teen about suicide and pay attention to warning signs. Suicide is the third leading cause of death among youth 15 through 24 years of age.
- Talk with your teen about the dangers of drugs, drinking, smoking, and risky sexual activity. Ask him what he knows and thinks about these issues, and share your feelings with him. Listen to what he says and answer his questions honestly and directly.
- Discuss with your teen the importance of choosing friends who do not act in dangerous or unhealthy ways.
- Know where your teen is and whether a responsible adult is present. Make plans with her for when she will call you, where you can find her, and what time you expect her home.

A pdf of this document for reprinting is available free of charge from

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/childdevelopment/positiveparenting/adolescence2.html>

Additional Information:

www.cdc.gov/childdevelopment

1-800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636), www.cdc.gov/info