

## **TWELVE YEAR VISIT**

### **DEVELOPMENT**

1. At 12, some children have entered puberty. As you look around your school, you will notice that some kids look much older than others. No one is in control of when their body changes start or the rate in which they progress. Be kind and patient to others and to yourself. Shower and change clothes daily, use deodorant, take care of your teeth and breath.
2. Many young women have started having periods by age 12, but many others have not yet begun. Both are within normal. Usually, by the time you have had your period for 18-24 months, a regular cycle has developed. Keep track of your periods and let your parent or doctor know if you have any questions or problems with them. Keep supplies for yourself at school as well as at home.
3. School work ramps up at this age, and teachers will expect more of you. If you do not understand what is going on, ask for help. Everybody needs a little extra help now and then. Be kind to others who may need help at any given time.
4. Social media can be a great way to keep in touch with your friends. Never post anything on line that you would not want spammed to your entire school. You may regret what you say about someone or what you post about yourself. Postings live in the world of the internet for eternity. Speak up if you are being cyber-bullied. Someone will help you.
5. Friendships can change as you get older. The good news is that you always have the ability to make new friends if former friends have drifted. Join in with sports, art, or music programs in your community, or find youth groups through your town or religious group. If you are lonely, speak up – likely others feel the same way and would benefit from your friendship.
6. If you are depressed, worried, or feel like you don't fit in, ask for help. Make a list with your parent of people that you can reach out to. You are not alone and others want to help you have a good life experience.
7. You are old enough to be doing chores. You and your parents can discuss what is fair and reasonable. You have the responsibility to pitch in at home.

### **DIET**

1. Eating habits developed during childhood persist into adulthood. NOW is the time to think about what you are eating and learn how to make good choices.
2. A balanced diet is important. Fresh fruit and vegetables are important to have every day, if possible. Try not to skip meals. Avoid fast food restaurants. Read labels and pay attention to "serving size".
3. Eating in front of the TV can result in over-eating.
4. Nobody eats a "perfect" diet. If you aim to have the majority of your meals be healthy, you will be on the right path. If you want more information about what you should be eating, ask your doctor.
5. If you are struggling with your relationship with eating or worried about your body size, please speak to your doctor.

## **SAFETY**

1. Accident prevention is critical for kids your age. You will have the opportunity as you get older to make more decisions about your personal safety. Choose wisely. Avoid handling firearms, or carrying weapons of any kind.
2. Seatbelt restraints with or without a booster are the law. Wear a helmet if riding scooters, bikes, horses, or if skiing or sledding or participating in any such sport. Never swim alone. Avoid trampolines. Value your healthy brain and body.
3. Never take any medication or drug not prescribed for you.
4. Avoid alcohol or drug use. Using these will kill off brain cells that you will need for the rest of your life. If alcohol or drug use is in your family, you are at higher risk for addiction. No one sets out to become an addict.
5. You are too smart and know too well the dangers of smoking or chewing tobacco. Do not let the tobacco companies cause you to become addicted. It is an expensive habit. It will give you bad breath, yellow teeth, and risks of life threatening illness. Electronic vaping will addict you and is dangerous to your health. Do not begin or continue vaping.
6. Use sun block when appropriate. You need to re-apply if you are swimming or sweating.
7. Use insect repellent to avoid tick and mosquito bites. We recommend DEET containing products applied once per day if you are going to be exposed. These should be washed off well each night.
8. If you become aware of another kid feeling suicidal, or if you feel suicidal, SPEAK UP!! You may very well save a life by paying attention to these powerful thoughts. You need to get a grown up involved immediately.
9. No one has the right to touch your body without your permission. You do not have the right to touch anyone else's body without their permission. If this is happening to you, please ask for help and keep asking until a trusted grown up gets involved.

## **SLEEP**

1. Your body is still growing. You need sleep in order to grow and do your best in school. Use of caffeine, exposure to light in your room at night, use of video games prior to bed all can make it harder to sleep. Start getting ready for sleep about an hour before you want to be sleeping.
2. Daily exercise will help you sleep.

## **DISCIPLINE**

1. You and your parents should continue to communicate respectfully about expectations. If you yell at them, they will have a hard time treating you as a young adult. It is always best to be calm when discussing problems. If you need to do so, write down what you want to discuss and your thoughts about how to solve problems. Your parents are there to help you.
2. You may disagree with your parents, but try to be respectful of their rules. If you feel unsafe at home, please talk with a trusted grown up like a teacher, doctor, coach, or clergy person.
3. Your parents have the responsibility to keep you safe.

## **HELPFUL NUMBERS**

BAGLY (Boston Area Gay and Lesbian Youth): 617-227-4313

Alateen (for kids whose lives are touched by family members who drink or use drugs): 888-425-2666

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 800-273-8255

Trevor Lifeline (crisis intervention for teens and young adults in the LGBTQ community): 866-488-7386

**A parent or guardian must accompany you to all visits.**

**Copies of this and all Handouts may be found on our website at [www.tri-countypediatrics.com](http://www.tri-countypediatrics.com)**