

EIGHTEEN YEAR VISIT

DEVELOPMENT

1. As you look around, other kids at school may look much more or less developed than you. Some guys sport beards, others have just entered puberty. Many, but not all girls have started having periods. Be kind and patient to others and to yourself. 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.
2. Shower and change clothes daily, use deodorant, take care of your teeth and breath.
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. If you are struggling, get your parents involved. You will need to do homework in order to keep up with school work. You need a quiet designated place to do homework. Being organized helps you ensure that you know about your assignments, bring home the necessary materials, and pass them in when they are due. Try not to wait until the last moment for long-term projects. Teachers will want you to start thinking about work, not just spitting back facts. Resist the urge to take the easiest way out, if possible. The more you put in to your work, the more you will get out of your studies.
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. Many high schools have clubs that allow you to have fun and make friends with similar interests. If you do not have a club at your school that allows you to follow your interests, ask your guidance counselor if you can have support to start one.
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.
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. You are an adult and want to be treated as an adult. Show your family that you can take initiative and do your share.
8. You are probably trying to determine what is your next path after leaving high school. Some people join the military, others go to work or a vocational training program. Many go to a community or four-year college. Your school guidance department can help you find out what resources are available for you to determine a good next step. There is no one size fits all path. Have an honest discussion with your family about your plans. You have to own this process. It is a very stressful time for many people, as they are leaving behind lifelong friends and habits from high school and looking ahead to an unknown or uncertain future. If you need help, ask. If, in the process, you change your mind, you can always change your career or educational path!
9. You are now an adult. Contracts you sign are valid. You should register to vote and become an educated voter. Be responsible.
10. **Once you turn 18, your parents will no longer have access to your medical records. Your doctor will need your permission to speak with a parent regarding your medical care. You should begin the process of transitioning your medical care to an adult physician at this time.**

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 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. You may be about to get your driver’s permit or license. This is an enormous responsibility. Do not drive if you are angry, tired, unable to concentrate, under the influence of drugs or alcohol. You could kill someone or yourself. Being able to drive is a privilege, not a right. Your parents and you together decide when this is the right time to take this step. Even if you are a good driver, you **MUST** try to avoid distractions such as cell phones, eating in the car, arguments or passionate discussions with others in the car. Follow the rules of the road. Expect that in bad weather or poor road conditions, it will be harder to safely drive. Leave enough time to get to your destination so that you do not have to speed. When you are driving, expect the unexpected.
4. Never take any medication or drug not prescribed for you.
5. 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. Under the influence of alcohol or drugs, you may make decisions that you regret later on or that may lead to your being hurt.
6. 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.
7. Use sun block when appropriate. You need to re-apply if you are swimming or sweating.
8. 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.
9. 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.
10. 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. Talk with your parents about when they think you can start dating. If you are sexually active, you can get infected with a sexually transmitted infection. You can create a pregnancy. You can complicate relationships and hurt feelings of your partner. If in doubt, it is best to wait to be sure. Be safe. Use protection. There is no such thing as fully “safe sex”. Talk with your doctor if you feel that you have concerns about pregnancy or STI’s, or about sexual orientation or identity. Be respectfully of others who may be uncomfortable with issues around sexuality. Your doctor can answer questions or guide you to resources where answers can be found.
11. Your parent has a requirement to keep you safe and know where you are. Do not lie about your whereabouts, because if you do, they cannot keep you safe. Situations can arise where suddenly you need a grown up to intervene. It is ok to call for help, even if you think that your parent may be upset with you. They love you and will be there for you.

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

Planned Parenthood: 800-258-4448

Copies of this and all Handouts may be found on our website at www.tri-countypediatrics.com