



# DESERT GROVE

## Family Medical

Specializing in the HEALTH of Your Family!

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### 13-14 Year Check

#### **GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT:**

Now is the time when the adolescent "growth spurt" usually begins. Girls are almost two years ahead of boys in physical and emotional development. There is a pattern to your teenager's growth; it begins with the arms, legs, hands and feet. That is why the child often seems long-legged, gangling, and clumsy. When the child reaches 14, the clumsiness will improve.

#### **SELF-ESTEEM:**

Talk to your child about the things they do right. Say "thank you" and let them know how important they are to you. Give the child positive support when learning new skills. Belief in yourself comes from doing, taking action and getting involved. Children need to feel loved and capable. Children raised by parents with high levels of warmth, support, understanding, communication, and discipline will express a greater degree of self-confidence or belief in oneself. They are more likely to engage in behaviors that are healthy and normal. They perform better in school, handle stress better, and are less likely to try alcohol, tobacco, or illegal substances.

Teenagers will have behavior changes and extreme moodiness. The teenager will seem to push the parent away. There may be an increase in fights between parent and child. These are a result of the child struggle to find their own way. This period will require much patience and understanding.

At this age your child could become depressed. It is important that you know the signs of depression. They can be moody, withdrawn or have trouble completing things they have to do. They may not sleep much or sleep too much. Your child may tell you there is no hope for their future; talk about wanting to die. Listen to what they are telling you. Problems that seem small to you can feel like the end of the world to them. Talk to your child and listen to what they are telling you. If your child is depressed, talk to your doctor.

Friends and belonging to a group are very important at this age. He/she will dress, wear makeup, and style the hair according to what their friends choose. The way they talk, the music they listen to, and dancing is very different from the parents. Understanding teenagers can be very difficult, be patient.

#### **SAFETY:**

What a teenager's friends choose to do can be the greatest threat to a teenager's safety. They want try to impress their friends. Teenagers will take part in dangerous activities because they have the feeling that nothing can happen to them. Teenagers will take risks that they should not take. Car accidents, drowning, burns, poisoning, and suicide. Some teenagers are carrying guns, and the problem is getting worse. Teenagers should not have guns unless it is being used in sports and an adult is present. Your teenager is growing up and can make some choices on their own. There is still a need for parents to guide them for their safety and well being.

#### **EATING:**

Teenagers are growing rapidly and the demand for calories and healthy foods is needed for the fast growth. There are several reasons a teenager does not eat right. Parents have less control over what they eat. The influence of friends, pressure of time, all their activities, makes it difficult to eat right. They tend to overeat and eat junk food or they are too busy and don't eat at all. Parents can have a very difficult time trying to get the teenager to eat right. The best approach is

to explain that healthy foods will help with their skin, muscle tone and shiny hair, because the most important thing for a teenager is to look good. Another thing a parent can do is to have healthy foods like, vegetables, fruits, milk and breads around the house and not to buy the junk foods that are high in fats, sugars and caffeine.

#### **ORAL HYGIENE:**

Regular dental check-ups and cleaning are very important. To keep your child's smile beautiful, they should brush and floss at least twice a day.

#### **SEX EDUCATION:**

Today's teenagers are over-exposed to sexual messages on TV, movies, magazines, and books. The development of their bodies and increased sensitivity of the genitals may cause the teenager to dream about the opposite sex. Masturbation is common at this age, especially among boys. Teenagers may be afraid to discuss these feelings with parents. They often get their information on sex from friends, magazines, and movies for sex information. Teenagers need correct information about menstruation, sex, pregnancy, birth, and birth control. They also need to know that their feelings and curiosities are normal. Parents should be careful not to make the child feel guilty. There are books to help parents learn how to discuss sex with their children. Talk openly to your child about these subjects. Make sure they are getting the right message.

#### **AIDS AND SEXUAL TRANSMITTED DISEASES:**

Sexual transmitted diseases (STD's) should be discussed with your children. Talk to them about the positive outcomes from abstinence (not having sex). If your child is sexually active, the only protection available is a condom, which is not 100% safe if not used right or if faulty (defective). Birth control pills or other forms of birth control do not give protection against AIDS or sexually transmitted diseases. People who use drugs are more likely to take part in behavior they ordinarily would not take part in. Tell them they can get Aids from sharing needles or syringes. There is no cure for AIDS, only death. The risks of getting an STD are: possibly not being able to have a baby, passing the disease on to your newborn, living with an infection that has no cures, or death can result from some of these diseases.

#### **DRUGS, ALCOHOL, AND SMOKING:**

Curiosity and watching older children and adults' may cause your child to try cigarettes, alcohol, and drugs such as marijuana. Parent, discuss this behavior with your child and be open so they can feel free to come and talk with you. The best way to teach a child is by the example you set. If you think there is a serious alcohol or drug abuse problem with your teenager, seek the advice of a school counselor or doctor.

#### **IMMUNIZATIONS:**

DT or tetanus is given at age **14** and every ten years after that.