

Adolescent Development

STAGE	FACTS	TIPS
<p>Early Adolescence</p> <p>females: 9-13 years males: 11-14 years</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beginning of extreme growth of height/weight lasting 2-4 years. Menstruation begins for many females. • Concern with body changes and privacy. Faster growth of extremities affecting coordination. Breast and genital enlargement in response to an increase in hormones. • Concrete thinking. Beginning to explore new ability to think abstractly. • Improved ability to use speech to express themselves, but more likely to express feelings by actions. • Rule and limit testing • Moodiness • Beginning experimentation with substances (alcohol, tobacco, drugs) • Same-sex friends and group activities. Close friendships gain importance. • Exploring music, hair, and clothes. Media & peer influences high. • Searching for new people to love in addition to parents. • Sexual fantasies are common and may serve as a source of guilt. • Masturbation begins during this period and may be accompanied by guilt. Worry about being “normal”. • Gay, lesbian and bisexual youth may feel differently without knowing why. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective communication tools for these teens must be very concrete and specific. • Use health education materials that emphasize style rather than tables, graphs and wordy explanations. • Begin by focusing on issues that most concern this age group (weight gain, acne, physical changes). • Foster their development of a positive identity.
<p>Middle Adolescence</p> <p>females: 13-16 years males: 14-17 years</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full physical maturation is attained. • Extremely concerned with appearance and one’s body and sexual attractiveness. • Increased abstract thinking, more consistent evidence of conscience. • Examination of inner experiences. Development of ideals and selection of role models. • Denial of consequences of behavior is typical, improving with age. • Often risk takers view themselves as invincible. • Self involvement alternating between unrealistically high expectations and poor self concept. • Strong emphasis on belonging to the “right” peer group. • Experimentation with relationships and sexual behaviors. Frequently changing relationships with more emphasis on physical contact. • Movement towards defining sexual identity, often accompanied by identity confusion and fears of homosexuality. • Sexual behaviors do not always match sexual identity or orientation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healthcare provided in an authoritative manner might incite rebellious behavior. • Teens must identify with the healthcare message to ensure compliance and success. • Illness may be used to avoid emotional or social problems. • Peer counseling, if carefully selected, can be effective with this age group. • Focusing on prevention and harm reduction is key. • Avoid making assumptions about sexual orientation and activities. Be sure to ask specific questions. • Be aware of the confusion sexual orientation may cause and help to provide gay and lesbian youth with role models and support systems. • Increased capacity for goal setting expands the health counseling that can be provided. • Journal writing may be an effective intervention at this stage.
<p>Late Adolescence</p> <p>females: 16-21 years males: 17-21 years</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Body image and gender role definition nearly secured. • Attainment of abstract thinking and ability to think ideas through and make independent decisions. • Feelings are expressed using words. • Concern for the future, thoughts of their own role in life. • Ability to set goals and follow them through. • Self regulation of self esteem. • Ability to delay gratification. • Acceptance of social institutions and cultural traditions. • Greater intimacy skills. • Sexual identity secured. • Sexual behavior becomes more expressive. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased abstract reasoning allows for more traditional counseling approaches, including consequences for decisions, goal setting and follow through.