



Adolescent Development and Behavior

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Adolescence

Adolescence is the developmental process from the onset of puberty to the mid-20s

- **Puberty:** a gradual developmental transition among youth, shaped by biological and social processes

Adolescent development involves profound changes in biological, cognitive, psychosocial, and emotional development

Adolescent Phases:

- **Preadolescence** (9-11 years):
- **Early Adolescence** (12-13 years)
- **Adolescence** (14-15 years)
- **Late Adolescence** (15-20+ years)

There are predictable “tasks” or processes that are associated with healthy adolescent development, depending on the adolescent phase. As adolescents progress through developmental phases and tasks, there are expected and new behaviors that may present or arise.

HASE	DEVELOPMENTAL TASKS	Expected	Behavior
Pre-adolescence (9-11 years)	Beginning to form ties outside the family	High energy, restlessness, and fidgeting Argumentative with parents/caregivers (rules, neatness, time management)	“bathroom humor” exploring risky behaviors
Early Adolescence (12-13 years)	-Movement toward independence (parent/caregiver rules, family values)	-Moodiness, short-tempered ; -Emotional sensitivity; increased fatigue	“testy” behavior/language highly influenced by

	-Adjusting to new body image.	-Vocal confidence -Focused on the past and the present shift toward making and prioritizing friendships	peers/peer pressure increased risk-taking
Adolescence (14-15 years)	-Discovery of personal strengths -Develop ability to abstract think; futuristic thinking -New interest in exploring sexuality and sexual identity	-Irritable, aggressive, increased fatigue -Concerns with body/attractiveness -Desire for social approval -Spending less time with family and more time alone or with friends	sudden urge for autonomy physical exploration of sexuality (with self and others) rebelliousness self-consciousness social media engagement
Late Adolescence (16-20+ years)	-Consolidate personality -Regulate emotions and behavior; “inner dialogue” -Gaining physical independence from parents/caregiver	-Increased importance on intellectual/career interests anxiety/anxious tendencies -Firm identity; stable interests -Desire for serious relationships	exploring “adult” roles mature, romantic relationships & friendships exploring financial independence acting based on cognitive/moral values

How caregivers can support positive development and behavior for their adolescents:

1. Start Early, Ongoing Conversations
Talk with your child about healthy relationships, sex, sexuality, consent, safety, and substance use. Starting these conversations in early adolescence lays a foundation for open, honest communication later on and prepares them for real-life situations.
2. Help Them Understand Puberty
Explain what to expect during puberty and reassure your child that physical changes and emerging sexuality are normal. Be open to questions and talk to a professional, like a pediatrician, if necessary.
3. Keep the Tone Positive
Celebrate successes, recognize strengths, and focus on growth, even when correcting behavior.
4. Create a Stable, Loving Environment
A home filled with safety, structure, and love helps adolescents feel secure and supports their development.
5. Support Independence with Boundaries
Communicate clear, reasonable expectations for things like curfews, school, media use, etc. Gradually increase independence and modify rules as your adolescent shows responsibility.
6. Set a Positive Example
Model healthy behaviors and respectful communication to provide a good example for your adolescent to follow.
7. Encourage Responsibility
Teach your adolescent to take care of their belongings, contribute to household chores, and accept rules/limits as part of growing up.
8. Promote Thoughtful Decision-Making
Help your adolescent learn to think before acting and consider the consequences of their choices.

9. Respect Individuality and Growth
Respect your adolescent's unique identity, interests, and ideas. Let them know you're always there to support and guide them.
10. Build a Relationship Based on Trust and Respect
Create a culture of openness in your home to encourage your adolescent to feel comfortable talking to you. Have honest conversations and maintain mutual respect.

Credit:

<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/age-s-stages/teen/Pages/Stages-of-Adolescence.aspx>

https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Facts_for_Families/FFF-Guide/Preparing-Preparing-For-Adolescence-056.aspx

References

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<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK545476/>
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