

NIH News in Health

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Parenting Teens Guiding Kids Through Turbulent Years

The teenage years are filled with change. Body, mind, and feelings are maturing quickly. Teens are also learning about who they are and who they want to become. To do that, they need to try new things. But that means taking risks.

“Parenting during the teen years can be a very exciting but also a really risky time,” explains Dr. Kevin Haggerty, an NIH-funded prevention researcher at the University of Washington.

That’s because a teen’s brain is still developing and is extra sensitive to emotion and to things that feel good. The parts of the brain that control impulses and rational decision-making are still being formed.

“That creates a perfect storm for quick addiction,” Haggerty explains. It puts teens at higher risk for alcohol, drug, and tobacco use, high-risk sexual behavior, and risky driving choices. They’re also more likely to experience mental health issues, like anxiety and depression.

Teens can make unhealthy food choices and neglect physical activity. Most don’t get the eight to 10 hours of sleep they need each night. But certain parenting strategies can help guide kids toward healthier and less risky choices.

“Keeping lines of communication open, monitoring and knowing your children’s peers, and staying engaged and connected as a parent



are the key ways to reduce risk,” explains Dr. Beth Stormshak, an NIH-funded psychologist at the University of Oregon.

Stormshak and Haggerty have studied different parenting programs designed to reduce risky teen behavior. Their research and other studies have shown that some strategies can help.

Build a Positive Relationship • Creating a positive, trusting relationship with your kids is key. It makes them more likely to listen to your advice and follow your rules.

“Positive parenting really means forming a positive relationship with your child that’s focused more on praise, support, and incentives and less on negative things like yelling,

criticizing, or nagging,” explains Stormshak. “If you could choose one thing to do differently with your teenager, that would be it.”

You can create a more positive relationship by spending quality time with your teen. Listen to what they’re thinking and feeling. Show interest and concern over their problems. That helps them feel more connected with you.

It’s important to stay calm when they share, and respect differences of opinion. That helps build trust. It also gives you the chance to teach them how to problem solve. Sharing your experiences rather than lecturing helps build better communication.

You can build stronger bonds with your teen by recognizing and rewarding their positive behaviors. Give them opportunities to learn new things. Tell them when they’re doing well.

It’s also a good idea to have your kids be a part of the discussion about expectations for the family. That helps create positive, open communication and keeps everyone clear on the rules.

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Making sure you have good communication with your teen will help you catch problems early, support positive behavior, and better monitor their life.

Keep in Touch • As your kids age, you're with them less often. That makes building trust and good communication important. Your ability to know what's going on in their lives largely depends on what they'll share with you.

"Monitor what's going on with your adolescent in ways that don't destroy bonding or connecting, but in ways that promote it," Haggerty says. "Have conversations, ask questions, know who your kids' friends are, have conversations with your kids' friends. So much of these things take place, not in a face-to-face conversation, but in a casual conversation when you're walking or talking or in a car or listening when you're driving kids around, and being aware of what's going on in your kid's life."

Dr. Bruce Simons-Morton, a public health expert at NIH, has found that kids who have more friends who drink alcohol are more likely to do so

themselves. In fact, peer influence is one of the highest predictors of teen drinking.

"As teens get older, they spend more time with peers. The parent influence wanes while the peer influence increases," he says.

Talk with your teen about what qualities to look for in a friend, like being honest, respectful, and involved in school, and not acting in dangerous or unhealthy ways.

Studies have found that parents' expectations and support can affect their kid's choices into early adulthood. Teens with parents who are more involved in their lives have less alcohol and drug use and safer sexual behaviors.

Set Limits and Consequences •

Parents can also help teens avoid risky behavior by setting clear limits and expectations ahead of time and consistently following through with consequences.

"We find that parenting matters even the year after high school," explains Simons-Morton. His studies have found that young adults whose parents had high expectations for them to not abuse alcohol were less likely to increase how much they drank after high school.

Start telling your child early on what your expectations are about drinking, drugs, driving, and sexual behavior. Encourage them to eat healthy and get enough exercise. And keep talking about your expectations and values throughout their teen years. Be consistent with praise and rewards when they follow the rules.

Setting consequences your teen will care about is another important part of parenting. That can mean different things depending on the teen. Privileges like cell phones, video games, spending time doing their favorite hobby or sport, or driving may work to encourage good behavior.



Wise Choices

How to Guide Teens' Choices

- Talk with your teen about their life. Listen to their concerns and opinions. Respect their views.
- Encourage kids to try new things that interest them, like sports, music, or volunteer work.
- Stay involved in your teen's school and after-school activities. Get to know their friends.
- Teach your teen how to solve problems and resolve conflicts on their own. Create opportunities for them to make their own decisions. Be available for advice and support.
- Help your teen plan ahead for difficult or uncomfortable situations. Talk about what to do if they're being pressured for sex, to use drugs or alcohol, or to accept a ride from someone under the influence.
- Put your rules for driving into a parent-teen driving contract. See www.cdc.gov/parentsarethekey/parents/index.html for tips.
- Limit your teen's screen time each day. Be aware of their online activities and offer guidance about posting on social media.
- Respect your teen's need for privacy.

"In adolescence, you're trying to figure out who you are," Stormshak explains. There's no guarantee you can help your teen avoid risky choices. But sharing your values and expectations and talking about how their choices can affect their life can help guide them toward better options. See the Wise Choices box for some tips on parenting teens. ■

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Web Links

For more about parenting teens, see "Links" in the online article: newsinhealth.nih.gov/2019/06/parenting-teens

Beating Bursitis

Take Care of Your Joint Cushions

Almost everyone has joint pain at some point in life. It can flair up suddenly. Or it can start off mild and get worse over time.

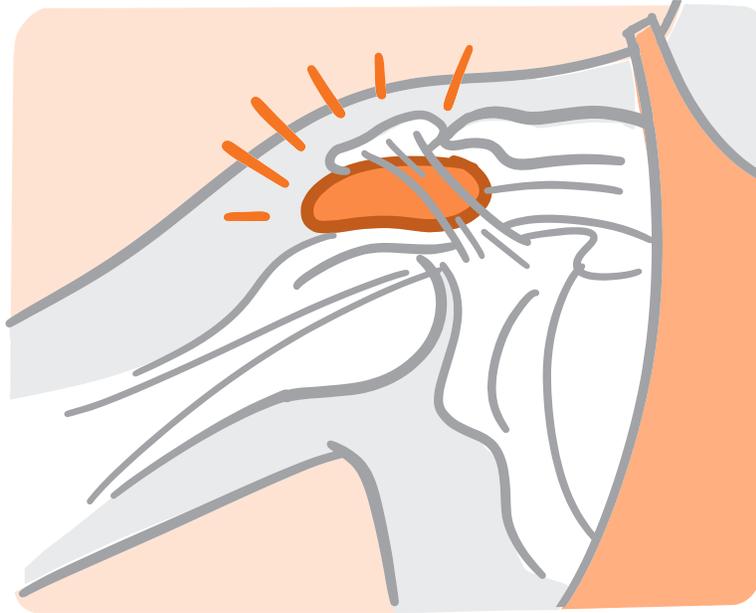
A common cause of joint pain is bursitis. Bursitis happens when a bursa in a joint becomes inflamed. (When you see “itis” at the end of a medical word, it means **inflammation**.)

A bursa is a small, fluid-filled sac that acts as a cushion between bones and other moving parts, such as muscles, tendons, or skin. You have about 150 bursas in your body. They keep joints such as your shoulders, knees, and elbows working smoothly. But they can be hurt by sudden or repetitive forces.

Bursitis often flairs up because of another injury, explains Dr. Jeffrey Katz, a joint specialist at Brigham and Women’s Hospital and Harvard University. When an injury causes someone to move their joint differently than normal, it can irritate a bursa.

“For example, if you have a foot injury, it can change the way you walk. Maybe you don’t even notice it, but you limp a little,” Katz says. “And that changes the way that forces from muscles and tendons pull on the bones. That subtle change can give rise to some inflammation in the bursa.”

Bursitis can also be caused by putting pressure on a joint for too long, such as kneeling or leaning on your elbows. Activities that require



repetitive motions or place stress on your joints—such as carpentry, gardening, playing a musical instrument, or playing a sport—can sometimes trigger bursitis. Rarely, a bursa may become inflamed due to an infection.

It can sometimes be hard to tell whether joint pain is caused by inflammation in a bursa, tendon, or muscle, Katz says. Lab tests and imaging often can’t help pinpoint the source of the pain. Your doctor will likely do a physical exam and ask questions about your activities and recent injuries.

Fortunately, treatment for most simple cases of joint pain is similar no matter what’s causing it, Katz adds. This may include rest, over-the-counter drugs that suppress inflammation, and gentle stretching and strengthening exercises.

Physical therapy may help if bursitis has reduced your ability to move your joint or if it results in muscle weakness. If your bursitis is due to an infection, your doctor may

prescribe antibiotics.

Bursitis and other causes of joint pain can be prevented by paying attention to how you move and perform daily activities. See the Wise Choices box for tips on preventing bursitis.

Bursitis is more likely to occur the older you get. To help prevent bursitis as you age, try to stay as active as possible, Katz says. “The best way to stay out of trouble with these joint injuries is to try to stay flexible and strong,” he concludes. ■



Wise Choices

Preventing Bursitis

- Cushion your joints when kneeling or putting pressure on your elbows.
- Take frequent breaks from repetitive tasks.
- Exercise regularly but begin new activities or exercise routines slowly.
- Strengthen muscles around your joints.
- Stop activities when you first feel pain.
- Use two hands to hold heavy tools.
- Wear comfortable, properly fitting shoes.
- Practice good posture and position the body properly when going about daily activities.

Definitions

Inflammation

Heat, swelling, and redness caused by the body’s protective response to injury or infection.



Web Links

For more about bursitis, see “Links” in the online article: newsinhealth.nih.gov/2019/06/beating-bursitis



Health Capsules

For links to more information, please visit our website and see these stories online.

Telemedicine May Affect Quality of Care

Have you used a computer, smart-phone, or tablet to talk with a doctor? This is called telemedicine. A study suggests that in-person doctor visits provide better care for children with certain infections.

Researchers used claims data from a health plan to look at visits for children with respiratory illnesses. These included colds, sore throats, and ear infections. More than 5,000 children received care via telemedicine. About 88,000 visited an urgent care clinic. More than a million saw primary care doctors.

The team counted the antibiotics prescribed within two days for each type of visit.

Children were given antibiotics most often after telemedicine visits. They received these drugs after 52% of telemedicine, 42% of urgent care, and 31% of primary care visits.

The team looked at whether doctors followed guidelines for giving antibiotics. These drugs can treat bacterial infections like strep throat. But they can't treat viral infections like colds and flu.

Only 59% of telemedicine visits

met the guidelines, compared with 67% of urgent care visits and 78% of primary care visits.

“As a pediatrician and a parent, I understand the appeal of telemedicine when a child is sick, since it offers the promise of connecting with a doctor in a way that is convenient and timely,” says Dr. Kristin Ray at the University of Pittsburgh. “But it is important to make sure that the quality of care that children receive remains high.” ■

Smoking and Your Heart

Smoking tobacco can cause many health problems. Did you know that it can harm your heart and blood vessels?

Smoking is a risk factor for heart disease, which can lead to heart attack, heart failure, and death. About one of every three people in the U.S. dies from heart disease.

Tobacco smoke contains many toxic chemicals. Once those

chemicals get inside your body, they travel around in your blood. They can damage your heart and blood vessels. They also affect the cholesterol and fats in your blood.

All this damage can help fats and other debris build up on blood vessels. The blood vessels can become narrower. That prevents blood from flowing through as easily. Not as much oxygen and nutrients

can get to the heart. That's how heart disease develops.

Those narrow blood vessels also raise your blood pressure. That pressure puts stress on your heart.

You can reduce your risk of heart disease by not smoking. Avoiding secondhand smoke also reduces your risk. Learn more at www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health-topics/smoking-and-your-heart. ■



Featured Website

Coping With Cancer

www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/coping

Cancer and its treatment can change your life and how you live each day. Learn how to manage your many emotions and ways to talk to your family and doctors.

Discover how to adjust to the many changes cancer brings and also how to plan for care after cancer treatment.



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