

What's Normal About...

Adolescence

Adolescence is generally defined as the time of life, from approximately age 12 to 18, when a person experiences the most rapid physical, intellectual, and emotional changes of his or her entire life.

Physical Changes

- ▶ Development of secondary sex characteristics (body hair, breasts, broad shoulders, deeper voice, etc.)
- ▶ Development of the ability to have children.
- ▶ Rapid growth and physical maturity. Boys usually reach full height between ages 18 to 20; girls between 16 and 17.

Thinking Changes

- ▶ Begin to move from simpler to more complex ways of thinking:
 - Question and test adults' statements and values
 - Imagine what their future could be like
 - Begin to explore ideas such as fairness, justice, etc.

Self-conscious, self-centered:

- Imagine themselves to be the center of attention of an "imaginary audience" that passes judgment on their appearance, actions, and behaviors
- Imagine that others are as interested in their behavior as they themselves are
- ▶ See themselves as one of a kind.
- "No one understands how I feel" or "I can't talk to anyone"
- Emphasis on individuality, worth, and loneliness
- Sometimes results in failing to recognize the consequences of their actions - "That won't happen to me"

New thinking skills are often uneven-adolescents can think and reason well in some areas but not others. For example, they can understand what they have learned in health class about preventing illness, but may be unable to apply what they have learned to their own behavior.

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These materials are presented as an educational resource and as helpful information to you. These materials are in no way meant to represent medical or clinical advice, recommendations or therapy. If you have any issues regarding your medical or mental health condition and need advice, please consult your provider/doctor.

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continued...

As adolescents move from early to middle stages, they begin to realize their ability to see the difference between their thoughts and the thoughts of others. They realize that they have many feelings in common with other people and that they are at risk of being hurt if they don't make good decisions.

Social Development

- ▶ Seek friends to meet emotional needs that in the past were met only by parents
- ▶ Disturbances in self-esteem and self-confidence
- ▶ Struggle between desire for independence and continued need for adult affection, guidance, and help in setting limits
- ▶ Increased need for privacy
- ▶ Strong desires to commit to causes and people
- ▶ Development of new interests and abilities coupled with a need to succeed at things they try
- ▶ Questioning and reevaluating family/spiritual/social beliefs and values
- ▶ Struggle towards establishing a sense of identity as a one-of-a-kind human being
- ▶ Confusion due to facing new desires, opportunities, and decisions

As adolescents move into the middle and late stages of their development, they begin to move towards making career/lifestyle changes. Often they can begin to understand that they are a part of the "big picture," and can show more self-confidence and decision-making skills.

If you need help, contact a care manager, your nearest regional care center or call FHP at

Area 5: 1-888-563-9022

Area 6: 1-800-808-8033

Area 7: 1-866-717-3816

Materials for this publication were adapted from Child Development, and About Parenting, Channing L. Bete Co., a parenting series.

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