

Teenagers and Stress – What Parents Can Do

For teens, life can become overwhelming with homework, pressure to get good grades, friendships, relationships, many deadlines, jobs, extracurricular activities, and home responsibilities. As a result, teenagers may start feeling stressed without recognizing or knowing how to cope.

Teens may not see how stress can change their behaviour and impact their thinking. As a parent, you can support your teen by helping them to recognize the signs of stress. Common signs of unhealthy stress for teens include: irritability, anger, excessive worry, sleeping problems, eating too much or too little, and frequent stomach/headaches (when they have been seen by a physician and have been told they are healthy).

Noticing changes in your teen and identifying these changes, is an important step to opening up conversations about stress [e.g., *You are quick to get angry lately. (Provide a specific example: Last week you fought with your sister a lot and this week you've been on edge with everyone). That is not like you. Has something happened?*]. This shows that you care and are there to support them. Ask your teens how they are feeling and listen to what they are saying to build trust. Ask them about what may be causing them to feel stressed and together identify healthy ways to address it.



As parents, you can help your teen to reduce stress.

- Encourage them to take time for themselves. Being physically active, having fun, listening to music, practicing yoga, practicing deep breathing, getting enough sleep, and spending time with friends are all examples of ways to decrease stress.
- Remind them they can make choices and determine how to respond to stress in their lives and that you are there to chat and provide support.
- Model healthy coping by: taking slow deep breaths and trying to remain calm when dealing with stressful situations, problem solving, being active, getting enough sleep, eating well, and seeking support when needed.

Did You Know?

Being physically active every day can help teens:

- increase focus and concentration
- show improved behaviour
- perform better academically
- develop self-esteem
- have a stronger sense of school connectedness
- improve fundamental movement skills
- sleep better and have more energy
- fight off sickness and disease
- improve physical and mental health
- build healthy bones, hearts, muscles, and selves

For fun ideas on how to stay active visit:

- <http://www.participaction.com/get-moving/tips/>
- <http://activeforlife.com/>

A Family Plan for a Tobacco-Free Home and Car

There are 7,000 chemicals in tobacco smoke, 69 of which we know cause cancer. There is no safe level of exposure to tobacco smoke. Tobacco smoke is either:

- First-hand, is what the smoker inhales and then blows out.
- Second-hand, is the smoke inhaled by the person who is near a smoker. It includes first-hand smoke and the smoke released from the end of a burning cigarette.
- Third-hand, is the harmful residue and gases left on surfaces (such as on furniture and in carpet and clothes) after a cigarette has been smoked.

In children, second-hand smoke increases the change of respiratory infections (like chest colds) and ear infections. Children with asthma will likely have more serious attacks and more often. Smoking in the home or in the car affects the health of everyone in the family, including pets. The best way to protect your family from being exposed to second and third-hand smoke is to make your home and car tobacco-free. Work together as a family to make a plan:

- Talk about the benefits of a tobacco-free home and car.
- Give everyone a chance to speak.
- Plan for guests who may want to smoke.
- Set up an area outside, away from doors and windows, in case someone wants to smoke.
- Remove all ashtrays from inside your home and clean the one in your car.
- Hang signs to welcome guests to your smoke-free home and vehicle.

Celebrate your success as a family. It may take some time for everyone to adjust – there may be small setbacks. Always keep in mind that people who smoke are addicted to nicotine, which can make changes, such as smoking outside, hard to do. For more information and support in becoming tobacco-free, call AlbertaQuits at 1-866-710 QUIT (7848) or visit www.albertaquits.ca.