

Teenagers, Puberty, and Healthy Relationships – What Parents Can Do

Growing up can be a challenging time for teens and parents and a bit of love and understanding can go a long way. Let them know that you are there to support them. Sometimes watching your child develop and change into a young adult can be a difficult transition period. It may also be hard to “let go”. However, you are their parent and they still need you. You can be there and support them through this time.

Puberty in girls can begin from around the age of nine and in boys around the age of 10. As they are developing into young adults, they will need your support and trust as well as some privacy, respect, and encouragement. Discussing matters such as friendships, relationships, sexuality, and love are important. Be open-minded and do not judge. This will help them to feel that they can trust you and turn to you whenever they need help and support. Friendships are very important to teens. Having a close friend or group of friends and belonging to a group helps them feel good about themselves, learn to navigate relationships with others, and develop their own identity. Allowing them the opportunities to trust their own feelings and values builds emotional and cognitive strengths that will help them navigate life as they get older.



Here is an example of a situation you could encounter:

Problem: My son keeps asking me awkward questions about sex. I am not sure what to say.

Think it Through: The more they understand about their bodies, the less difficult it will seem.

Do: Find out more information, try visiting www.teachingsexualhealth.ca. Don't be embarrassed. Let them know they can ask you anything.

Adapted from: http://www.newport.gov.uk/stellent/groups/public/documents/leaflets_and_brochures/cont608148.pdf

Think Before You Drink: Tooth Erosion

It's no secret, most of your favorite beverages contain a lot of sugar! Sugar in beverages, along with bacteria in the mouth, create acids that can decay teeth. But did you know that many popular beverages such as pop, fruit juices and sport drinks, also contain acids that can damage teeth and lead to tooth sensitivity and pain? This is known as tooth erosion – the irreversible loss of tooth enamel caused by lengthy and repeated exposure to acidic substances. Teenagers can be prone to tooth erosion because of their tooth enamel and the impact of lifestyle choices, including drinking acidic beverages and poor oral hygiene. Because tooth erosion cannot be reversed, prevention is important:

- Drink water for thirst and milk with meals
- Reduce number of acidic beverages and use a straw for drinking them
- Rinse your mouth with water to remove acids
- Wait 30 minutes to brush your teeth after drinking an acidic beverage to prevent tooth enamel damage
- Brush twice a day with toothpaste containing fluoride to strengthen teeth and floss daily
- Visit your dentist regularly for check-ups and additional preventive treatments

The Eggsperiment - Calcium is a major part of tooth enamel. Check out how acid affects calcium, the mineral that keeps an eggshell hard. Gently place a hard-boiled egg with its shell into a container of vinegar until it is completely covered. Let the egg sit for at least 24 hrs. Observe what happens to the shell, how is this similar to tooth erosion?