



TOOL KIT FOR TEEN CARE, SECOND EDITION

Dear Parent:

Many parents wonder when to address their daughters' gynecologic health issues. Adolescent girls are confronted with numerous challenges, and the decisions they make can have serious consequences for their health and well-being. We want to join you in starting your daughter on the path to good reproductive health. To this end, we recommend that girls first visit a gynecologist between the ages of 13 years and 15 years or sooner if you have concerns.

The following three suggestions are ways we can work together to guide your daughter to a lifetime of good health.

- 1) Get informed.** Ask us for handouts that deal with teen issues. We have or can find materials on health topics that you can use in talks with your daughter. This includes reproductive health topics, such as menstruation (eg, what to expect, menstrual cramps or irregularity, tampon use, and hygiene), promoting abstinence, and contraception. We also can help you to learn about other health issues, such as alcohol and tobacco use, safe driving, and healthy diet and exercise.
- 2) Talk with your daughter.** Many health topics warrant open discussion. For example, although it may be awkward to discuss sex, it is important to talk with your daughter about it. In fact, parents who do so are more likely to have daughters who delay having sex. Too often, school health education programs lack important information. Thus, it is important for parents and physicians to work together with teens to fill in any gaps. Other topics, such as alcohol use, also need to be discussed. Many motor vehicle accidents involving teens occur because of alcohol use. It is important to set up an agreement with your daughter so she knows she can call you if she needs a ride home because she does not want to get into a car with someone who has been drinking.
- 3) Be sure your daughter is seeing a health care practitioner** who will discuss preventive health care issues with her, including pregnancy, prevention of sexually transmitted diseases, and immunizations. By bringing your daughter in at this age, we can work with you to give her the knowledge and skills she needs to make healthy decisions, identify important behavioral or physical health issues, provide any needed treatment, and refer her for other services, if needed.

Some girls are initially reluctant to visit a gynecologist because they do not want a pelvic examination. However, in most cases, a pelvic examination is not needed for young teens.

Ask us if you have any questions about adolescent health. Together, we can work to keep your daughter healthy and safe.

Sincerely,

