

Early Adulthood (17–25 years)



Physical development

What is happening?	How can I tell?	How can I help?
PHYSICAL ACTIVITY		
Levels of physical activity continue to decline	Less likely to engage in physical activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider barriers to participation such as cost, time, equipment and transportation (for example, youth may no longer have the support of parents in paying for activities) Continue to support youth in setting realistic goals and balance them with other priorities (school, work, social life) As youth begin to master movement concepts, begin to focus more on the development of skills and techniques Motivation at this stage has become primarily internalized. Programs and activities to promote physical development should focus on helping youth develop knowledge, skills and attitudes for a healthy, active lifestyle Encourage emerging adults to feel ownership of their own development and provide them with opportunities to design and implement programs and activities
Cardiovascular and muscular endurance, strength and flexibility are changing	<p>Females: in the absence of training, exhibit no further increase in cardiovascular endurance or muscular capabilities</p> <p>Males: gradual increase in cardiovascular endurance and muscle strength is peaking, and begins to level off (there are no further increases in muscular endurance)</p> <p>In the absence of training, slow decline in flexibility continues</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer activities that teach youth how to avoid and deal with injury (for example, learning a stretching routine) Provide access to information about positive and negative ways to increase strength and endurance (for example, information on the dangers of taking steroids or supplements to improve athletic performance)
GROWTH AND PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT		
Changes associated with puberty are concluding	<p>Females: have often completed pubertal changes</p> <p>Males: may continue to gain weight, height, muscle mass and body hair</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage and create open communication that is two-directional and allows youth to ask questions and be provided with age-appropriate information about their changing bodies and emerging sexual characteristics
Hormonal influences on the sleep cycle begin to reverse	Falls asleep earlier in the evening and wakes up earlier in the morning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support youth in maintaining a healthy sleep routine—going to sleep and waking up at appropriate times (for example, turning off the computer one hour before bed)
BODY IMAGE AND NUTRITION		
Development of body image is ongoing	<p>More apt to make social comparisons about body type</p> <p>Opinions about style, clothing and appearance become important</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be aware that youth may have an increased sensitivity to messages about body shape and sexuality Allow youth more independence in demonstrating their own style through clothing and decisions about appearance Encourage youth to focus on the parts of their bodies that they like and can feel confident about Lead by example, through sharing your own experiences
The need for making independent decisions about nutrition and healthy eating increases	Has more prominent opinions about, and a desire for independent control over, eating and nutrition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage some independence around food preferences and knowledge of nutrition and food preparation Nutrition plays an important role in healthy development during this time. Provide information about nutrition (for example, check out Canada's Food Guide) Encourage healthy eating habits and routines (for example, involve youth directly in grocery shopping or meal preparation) Engage youth in conversations about healthy eating and be aware of dramatic changes in diets that may indicate eating disorders