

# Adolescence (13–19 years)



## Physical development

What is happening?	How can I tell?	How can I help?
<b>PHYSICAL ACTIVITY</b>		
<b>Participation in physical activity is changing</b>	<p>May engage in less physical activity</p> <p>May begin to focus on a few physical activities or specialize in a few sports</p> <p>Choosing activities that reflect personal interests, abilities, ambitions, availability, and past experiences</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider barriers to participation such as cost, equipment and transportation (for example, highlight low-cost options such as skateboarding, soccer, offer opportunities in central locations to ease transportation issues)</li> <li>Motivation at this stage is beginning to become more internalized. Develop programs and activities that focus on helping youth develop knowledge, skills and attitudes for a healthy active lifestyle and promote the social and mental benefits of sports and leisure (for example, highlight the fact that sports like swimming can lead to a job as a lifeguard)</li> <li>Work with youth to set realistic goals</li> <li>Remind youth to balance their priorities (for example, school, work, social life)</li> <li>Enjoyment is still critical to physical development at this stage—providing positive experiences can impact future healthy lifestyle habits</li> <li>As youth age, provide more opportunities for empowerment and involvement in designing and implementing programs and activities so that they feel ownership and have a role in decision making</li> <li>Ensure that youth are participating in activities in a safe and secure space. Provide opportunities that allow youth to feel comfortable trying new things (for example, without a fear of being teased for failure)</li> <li>Provide opportunities for practice, proper instruction and encouragement—these elements are especially important during this stage of development to help ensure that youth can develop both skills and competence</li> <li>Encouraging participation in whichever physical activities appeal to the youth (for example, some youth who are less interested in traditional activities may want to try extreme sports while others may prefer yoga or hiking)</li> </ul>
<b>Cardiovascular and muscular endurance, strength and flexibility are changing</b>	<p>In the absence of training, cardiovascular endurance peaks and levels off in females</p> <p>Cardiovascular endurance continuing to increase gradually in males</p> <p>In the absence of training, there are no further increases in muscular strength or endurance for females</p> <p>Muscular strength continuing to increase gradually in males (muscle endurance peaks and begins to level off)</p> <p>In the absence of training, flexibility continues to slowly decline</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage youth to learn about their bodies and abilities through experiences with different activities</li> <li>Provide instruction and access to a safe environment where youth can learn about their changing abilities and establish their own healthy limits</li> <li>Remember that activities should teach youth how to avoid and deal with injury (for example, learning stretching routines)</li> <li>Provide access to information about positive and negative ways to increase strength and endurance (for example, information pamphlet on the dangers of taking steroids or supplements)</li> </ul>
<b>GROWTH AND PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT</b>		
<b>Puberty produces further physical changes</b>	<p>Males may experience a growth spurt</p> <p>For females growth may begin to slow down after the first menstrual period (most females reach adult height before the end of adolescence)</p> <p>Sexual development beginning to mature</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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 (this can help youth to develop healthy attitudes about their own bodies and sexuality and can help to promote safe sexual choices)</li> <li>Provide access to information from a range of reliable sources (for example, pamphlets, medical professionals and websites)</li> <li>Normalize changes where possible (for example, remind youth that acne occurs for almost everyone at some point)</li> <li>Share your own experiences (for example, the first time you shaved)</li> <li>Provide routine reminders and information about hygiene as youth develop (for example, a reminder about the need for deodorant)</li> </ul>
<b>Hormonal changes cause sleep and waking cycles to continue to shift</b>	<p>Falling asleep even later at night and waking up even later in the morning (may result in sleep deprivation and contribute to moodiness and irritability)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider planning activities and programs at times that are comfortable for a later sleep cycle (for example, don't hold events first thing in the morning)</li> <li>Encourage the ongoing use of strategies and routines (for example, turning off the computer one hour before bed) to help youth wake up and go to sleep at appropriate times</li> </ul>

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## Physical development (cont'd)

What is happening?	How can I tell?	How can I help?
<b>BODY IMAGE AND NUTRITION</b>		
<p><b>Development of body image is ongoing</b></p>	<p>Males: may be maintaining more positive body image than females</p> <p>Females: may be dissatisfied with parts of their body</p> <p>Transgendered youth may struggle with body image</p> <p>Negative perceptions of body image vary for youth from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds</p> <p>More commonly making social comparisons about body type (comparisons to unrealistic ideals shown in media can play a role in the development of this dissatisfaction)</p> <p>Placing greater importance on and forming opinions about style, clothing and appearance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be aware that youth may have an increased sensitivity to messages about their bodies</li> <li>• Allow youth more independence in demonstrating their own style through clothing and decisions about appearance</li> <li>• Encourage youth to focus on the parts of their bodies that they like and can feel confident about</li> <li>• Lead by example—avoid making critical comments about your own body</li> </ul>
<p><b>Knowledge of nutrition and healthy eating expands</b></p>	<p>May be forming opinions about, and a desire for, independent control over eating and nutrition</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allow some independence around food preferences</li> <li>• Remember that nutrition plays an important role in healthy development during this time. Provide information about nutrition (for example, check out Canada's Food Guide)</li> <li>• Encourage healthy eating habits and routines (for example, involve youth directly in grocery shopping or meal preparation)</li> <li>• Engage youth in conversations about healthy eating and be aware of dramatic changes in diets that may indicate eating disorders</li> </ul>