

Great Expectations[®]

FOR HEALTH

A BlueChoice[®] HealthPlan newsletter for parents of teens

Summer 2011

Teen Health

Health Reminder

Teen Vaccinations

At your teen's next doctor's visit, ask if it is time for one of these recommended vaccinations:

- **HPV (three-dose series)** Protects against genital warts and cervical cancer
 - **Meningococcal** Protects against meningitis
 - **Tdap** Protects against tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis (whooping cough)
 - **Influenza** Protects against the flu and should be given every year to protect against new strains of the flu
- Receiving timely vaccinations goes a long way in maintaining your teen's good health.



For healthy lifestyle tips, find us at [Facebook.com/BlueChoiceSC](https://www.facebook.com/BlueChoiceSC).

Parent and Teen Connection

Remember when you were a teenager? What an exciting time that was. You may also recall your teen years being a little confusing, as well.

Teenagers today face many of the same challenges and experiences that you faced, and many new ones, too. That's why knowledge and a good support system are important to making their teen years positive and memorable.

As a parent, you are a crucial part of your teen's support system. Keep engaging him or her in conversations on sensitive topics like alcohol, drugs and reproductive health. The connection you establish can help your teen come through his or her teenage years with flying colors!



Hip Teens, Savvy Parents

Hip teens often request name-brand clothing, electronics and other products. But savvy parents, like you, know name-brand items can be more expensive but aren't always better than the generic.

And that's the case with generic medication. At some point in your teenager's adolescent years, he or she may be prescribed medicine. Ask your teen's doctor if there is a generic available to treat his or her health condition. Generic drugs contain the same active ingredients as the brand-name, but generally cost a lot less.

Furthermore, if you fill a prescription for a brand-name drug and there is a generic available, not only will you pay the higher copayment* for the brand-name drug, you will also pay the price difference between the two drugs.** And that can add up to a lot of money.

As savvy parents, always request generic drugs whenever they are available. This can save you money to spend on your teen's *other* requests!

* Check your Schedule of Benefits to see if a copayment applies to your plan.

**You will not be charged more than the retail price of the medication.

Girls and Reproductive Health

Your teenage daughter is growing into a woman right before your eyes. Girls experience this precious time only once, so talk with her about her reproductive health on a regular basis.

There are many different facets of reproductive health, including sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). It is important to discuss STDs with your daughter because some STDs cause infertility if left untreated. Like chlamydia. Some girls do not show symptoms of chlamydia; therefore, a health screening is necessary to detect it.

Talk with your daughter to determine if she should get screened at her next checkup. Open and honest conversation today will preserve her reproductive health tomorrow.

Chlamydia Screening

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends yearly chlamydia testing of all sexually active women age 25 or younger. Older women with risk factors for chlamydia infections (those who have a new sex partner or multiple sex partners) and all pregnant women should be tested also.

What Do You Know About Teen Health?

All parents were teenagers once. While many health guidelines are the same as when you were a teen, some have changed. These questions and answers may refresh your memory about teen health and highlight some changes.

1. **How often should teens get a general well-checkup?** *Every year.*
2. **What is reproductive health care?** *This is health care that protects the reproductive system and makes sure it is functioning correctly. Good reproductive health care focuses on prevention and well-being.*
3. **When should your daughter first start visiting a gynecologist?** *The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) recommends that girls first see a gynecologist when they're between the ages of 13 and 15. During the exam, the doctor will talk to your teen about her development and address her questions in a confidential manner. The doctor will perform a physical, breast and external health exam. The doctor will also determine what other tests and vaccinations are needed.*
4. **Do teens need the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine?** *Yes. The CDC recommends girls ages 9 through 26 receive three doses of the HPV vaccine to protect them against HPV which may cause genital warts or cervical cancer.*

Parents: Stay Tuned In

Most teens experience changes in mood, temper, hobbies and behavior. Since this is “regular” teenage stuff, it may be difficult to tell if these changes are due to alcohol or drug use. As parents, stay tuned in to your teenager’s behavior; this can help you determine if he or she is using alcohol and other drugs, or just being a “regular” teenager.

Do you notice more school absences, declining grades, or changes in friends? What about increased secrecy about possessions or activities, or borrowing more money than usual? Or, maybe you have found drug accessories like rolling paper or shot glasses. If so, this could be evidence of alcohol and drug use that needs immediate attention.

Common signs can go unnoticed, so it’s important that you stay tuned in to your teen’s life and help him or her get help if needed. Talk to your teen’s doctor if you have concerns.

