

Talking with my 8-12 year old

Normal Development:

• Physical Changes³:

- Girls will:
 - have a growth spurt early in this age range
 - begin to develop breasts
 - begin to grow pubic and underarm hair
 - some begin getting their period
- Boys will:
 - have a growth spurt late in this age range
 - have deepening of their voice
 - begin to have growth of their testicles and penis
 - start to grow pubic hair
 - most will have spontaneous erections and wet dreams

• Social Changes³:

- Girls and boys that develop early are often self-conscious of their body and a target for teasing
- Your child may become interested experimenting with holding hands, hugging, and kissing other boys or girls

Risky Behaviors:

• Bullying:

- 10% of students report that they are the victim of bullies²
- These events are mostly likely to happen at school
- Victims of bullies are more likely to be depressed and attempt or commit suicide²
 - **Action:** Look for bruises that they refuse to explain, sudden drop in grades, fights about going to school
- 13% of students call themselves a bully²
- Bullies are at the same risk of depression and suicide attempts as the children they bully because they have probably been victims of abuse²
- Bullies are at high risk of dropping out of school and doing time in juvenile detention or jail⁴
 - **Action:** look for frequent calls from teachers or principals

• Experimenting with Alcohol¹:

- Adolescents are more likely to try alcohol if parents, grandparents, or siblings have a problem with alcohol abuse or allow the adolescent to try 'sips' of drinks
 - **Action:** Tell your child you care about them, their safety, and you don't want him/her to start drinking

- **Experimenting with Cigarettes¹:**
 - Kids with family members and friends that smoke are more likely to start smoking
 - **Action:** Tell your child that you care about his/her health & that smoking is hard to quit
- **Internet Safety:**
 - Kids are becoming more knowledgeable about how to use the internet⁵
 - **Action:** Know what websites they are viewing and if they are using chat rooms. Learn about safety and security settings, so you can block websites with adult material
 - Many kids do not know people lie about their age in chat rooms
 - **Action:** Tell your child to never give away personal information, telephone number, address, or school name to anyone they meet online

Conversation Starters:

Assure your child that no topic is off limits & you are always available to talk.

- You can always come to me with any questions or problems.
- Do you have any friends at school? What are their names?
- Have you ever been teased at school? Have you ever picked on anyone at school? Who could you tell if you were being teased at school?
- Have you ever tried any beer, alcohol, cold medicine? Did you like it? Have you ever tried smoking? How did you feel while you were smoking? Do you think people that smoke look pretty/cool? Do you think they smell good?
- What websites do you view? Could you show me your favorite website? Have you ever used a chat room or MySpace? Could you show me your MySpace page?

What if I can't answer their questions?

These recommended websites are resources for parents and other family members to read about sexual health, puberty, relationships, pregnancy, and myths. You can always call your health care provider!

- Parent's Sex Ed Center (www.advocatesforyouth.org/parents)
- Talking with Kids about Tough Issues (www.talkingwithkids.org)
- Families are Talking (www.familiesaretalking.org)

What if my son or daughter doesn't want to talk?

These recommended websites are resources for kids to get truthful information about their body and their health.

- Baby Can Wait (www.babycanwait.com)
- Birds and Bees (www.birdsandbees.org)
- Teenwire (www.teenwire.com)

Sources Cited:

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2. Barker, ED. "Joint Development of Bullying and Victimization in Adolescence: Relations to Delinquency and Self-Harm." *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*. 2008.
3. Fonseca, H. "Sexuality in the Child, Teen, and Young Adult: Concepts for the Clinician." *Primary Care: Clinics in Office Practice*. 2007.
4. Klomek, AB. "Bullying, Depression, and Suicidality in Adolescence." *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*. 2007.
5. Moreno, MA. "Display of Health Risk Behaviors of MySpace by Adolescents." *Archives of Pediatric Adolescent Medicine*. 2009.