

# Does MY TEENAGER need an ANNUAL CHECKUP?

The answer is **YES**, says Sarah Amoroso, DO, of Centura Health Physician Group Pediatrics NorthCare.



They may not be helpless infants any longer, but teens have a variety of potential health concerns, from nutrition to the physical and emotional challenges of puberty.

Whether they see a pediatrician or primary care physician, the teen years — while parents are still in the picture to keep an eye on their health — are a good time to ease teens into being comfortable discussing health and personal matters with a physician, Amoroso says.

**“Kids can learn to take charge of their own health, to not be embarrassed, and that there are no silly questions,”** she says. “We would much rather have them ask than assume something is normal. And they should know that what they tell us is confidential.” The exception to that confidentiality, Amoroso says, is if a patient expresses thoughts of harming themselves or others.

**Here are a few of the things a pediatrician or primary care doctor can check for:**

**Up-to-date vaccinations** • These don't stop in infancy. If your child had a meningococcal vaccine at 11 or 12, she'll need a booster at age 16. Teens who haven't had the vaccine can get it through age 18.



**Weight** • It's best to start early tracking weight and body mass index and advising teens about good nutrition. Now is the best time to start healthy habits, and to head off both potential obesity and eating disorders.

**Blood pressure** • As the number of overweight teens climbs, so does the potential for high blood pressure in adolescence.

**Depression** • Family physicians often are the first to spot signs of depression in adolescents. They usually can recommend resources to address the problem.



**Stress** • “Teens seem to be facing more and more of that today,” Amoroso says. And, just as with adults, stress can impact health. Now's a good time to help kids learn coping skills.

**Sexual questions or concerns** • Your pediatrician or primary care doctor can be a confidential and knowledgeable source of information. Boys should be shown how to perform regular checks for testicular cancer; girls should learn to perform regular breast exams. In addition, sexually active teens should be checked for sexually transmitted diseases, and sexually active girls should receive their first Pap smear. If they didn't get the HPV vaccine as adolescents, now's the time.



**Safety issues** • Your teen's physician may discuss topics like wearing bicycle helmets, safety belts, and the importance of not drinking and driving and not texting and driving.

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