

Pediatric Associates of Richmond

OUR PARENT GUIDE TO THE ADOLESCENT WELL VISIT

Adolescence is an extremely important time for yearly well child checks. Although adolescents tend to be very healthy patients, they are experiencing huge changes physically, cognitively, emotionally and socially.

At the start of the visit, your clinician's nurse will bring your adolescent to the exam room where the vital signs (height, weight, blood pressure, vision) will be taken and any age-appropriate screenings will be performed. A copy of the screenings we use may be found on our website under "Forms/Clinical Forms."

Your clinician will start the visit by talking to you and your teen together to address any mutual concerns. We have learned over the years that adolescents often have subjects they wish to discuss with their clinician in private. We believe that it is important for the teenager to have some private time to ask questions or discuss concerns that might be hard to talk about in front of their parents. Therefore, we will likely ask you to step out of the room at the conclusion of the visit, so that the clinician may speak alone with your adolescent to address his or her concerns. For the adolescent, assurance of confidentiality is crucial to the success of this discussion.

Some parents do have concerns about this private time, imagining that this time is being used to divulge secrets of the teen's sexuality or drug use. In our experience, both the adolescent and their parents appreciate that we take the important time for teenagers to begin developing their own relationship and rapport with their healthcare clinician that is separate from the relationship that may exist between their parents and the provider.

Topics that may be discussed include personal safety, mental health, smoking, alcohol, drug use, sexuality, sexually transmitted diseases, contraception, nutrition, making good choices and social issues. You will be advised of these confidential issues if your adolescent gives us permission to include you in the discussion.

Please be assured, if there is a risk to your adolescent by what is discussed, the clinician will be honest about the need to break confidentiality and include you in the discussion, no matter the issue.

Laboratory tests will also be performed which may include a screening for anemia, cholesterol levels and a urinalysis and urine screen for Chlamydia. Chlamydia trachomatis is a common STD and can be silent in the sense that the patient has no symptoms. The result can be serious and could cause permanent damage to a woman's reproductive system. According to the CDC, there are approximately 2.86 million Chlamydia infections reported annually, making it the most frequently reported bacterial STD in the US, and the prevalence is highest among adolescents and young adults below the age of 25 years.

Because many adolescents are often very private about sexual activity even when talking alone with their clinician, as a group, we have made the decision to test ALL of our adolescent patients, male and female, 16 years and older for Chlamydia and Gonorrhea at their annual physical exams to ensure we catch and treat diseases that can be very damaging. This is in keeping with the recommendation from the American Academy of Pediatrics, which recommends such screening based on the high prevalence of disease.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to care for your adolescent. It is our goal to provide the best and most complete healthcare possible to your adolescent and we know that you share this goal. We appreciate the trust you place upon us and we will never take that responsibility lightly. Our most important job is to help you in the medical and psychological development of your child so that he or she grows into a mature, well rounded, physically healthy, and happy adult.