



Teens + Living Well

Staying Healthy, Staying Safe

PATIENT EDUCATION

Smart
decisions

BE
SAFE

Consequences

BARBARA WOODWARD LIPS
PATIENT EDUCATION CENTER

The choices you make now...

During your teen years, you're building habits that will NOT ONLY affect your life today, they'll probably affect your physical and mental/emotional well-being in your 20s, 30s and beyond. Read this to learn more about some of the decisions you'll have to make — and how to make the best decisions FOR YOU.

What's inside...

• Nutrition	2
• Exercise	4
• Sleep	6
• Relationships.....	8
• Stress.....	10
• Mental health: depression, risk for suicide, anxiety, and substance use.....	12
• Safety: driving and Internet use	18
• Sexual health	22
• Final thoughts	28



Hang onto this

And remember: if you ever have any questions about anything related to your health and well-being, you can always talk to a member of your health care team!



Nutrition

Healthy food on the run

No matter what's going on during your busy days, your body is growing every day. You NEED three meals per day plus healthy snacks. Here are some fast options. Note: You need to use an ice pack for some of the mid-day snacks.

Breakfast

Make your next-day breakfast before you go to bed. Try these nutritious grab-n-go options:

- Dry cereal and a carton of yogurt.
- A cheese or peanut butter sandwich and a piece of fruit.
- Fruit and string cheese.
- A granola bar and a glass of milk.
- A whole wheat bagel with peanut butter



Snacks

Keep some healthy snacks in your backpack or locker, such as:

- Fresh fruit or vegetables (mini carrots or celery stalks).
- Crackers and cheese.
- Popcorn or pretzels.
- Apples and peanut butter.
- Breadsticks.
- Low-fat yogurt.



Dinner

When time is tight, try these ideas. Add a glass of milk and fruit or vegetables to make a complete meal.

- Roll up chicken, tuna, pork or beef with vegetables and low-fat cheese in a soft-shell tortilla.
- Make mini-pizzas with English muffins, pizza sauce and mozzarella cheese.
- Check the refrigerator. Pasta, casseroles or other leftovers from family meals can be easy dinner options.



Fast food

Fast food doesn't have to be unhealthy!

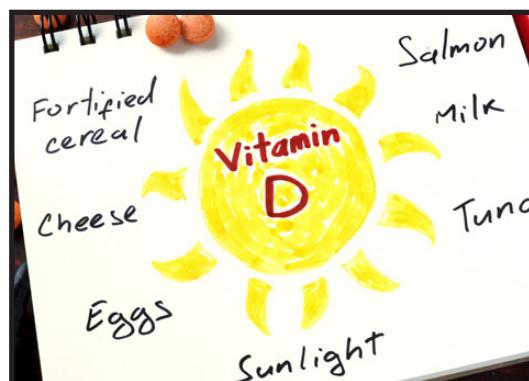
- Drink water or skim milk rather than soda.
- Try a salad, but limit salad dressing.
- Add a baked potato, fruit or vegetables instead of French fries or chips.
- Try extra vegetables on pizza rather than extra cheese, sausage or pepperoni.
- Go easy on the condiments. Ask for them on the side so you can control the amount on your food.



Don't skip calcium, vitamin D or iron

Calcium and vitamin D

You only have one "chunk" of time when you can build up your bones with calcium and vitamin D. That's the first 30 years or so of your life. Once you reach 30, your body stops building new bone. After that, you can only maintain the bone strength you already have. The best way to add calcium and vitamin D is by eating well-balanced meals, not by taking supplements.



Iron

Iron helps transport oxygen throughout your body. You need iron for your body to grow properly. When you don't have enough iron, you can feel tired and sluggish.



Multi-vitamin

Getting lots of nutrients in your food is best. But if you're like a lot of teens, there are days when you don't eat well-balanced meals. So think about taking a multi-vitamin that has calcium, vitamin D and iron.

Beware of fad diets

If a diet sounds too good to be true, it probably is. If you want to manage or lose weight, make healthy changes in your food choices and eating patterns and make time for regular exercise.

Don't "diet." Eat well and move often!

Exercise

Exercise helps immediately!

- It improves your mood, releases stress and increases energy.
- It helps you maintain a healthy weight.
- It builds strong bones.
- It decreases your risk of health problems, now and in the future.

If you're in a sport now, you're probably getting an hour per day of activity. But if you're in the off-season or you don't usually participate in a sport, you need to find some activity or exercise to do for an hour every day.

Make it part of your daily routine. Find some friends who will enjoy this too. Disconnect from electronics (TV, PC, etc.), and make it fun!

Think you have to sit out? Think again.

Having a medical condition, such as asthma or diabetes, doesn't have to put you on the sidelines. Talk to your care team about activities and sports you'd like to try. It may take some adjustments, but even with a medical condition, you can still be active somehow.

Just starting out?

Every little bit counts toward a healthier you! Try these tips for making exercise part of your daily routine:

- Find ways to move more. When you're on the phone, walk as you talk.
- Park at the far end of the lot. Take the stairs whenever you can.
- Make exercise fun! Walk the dog, bike with a friend or take a hike. Be creative.

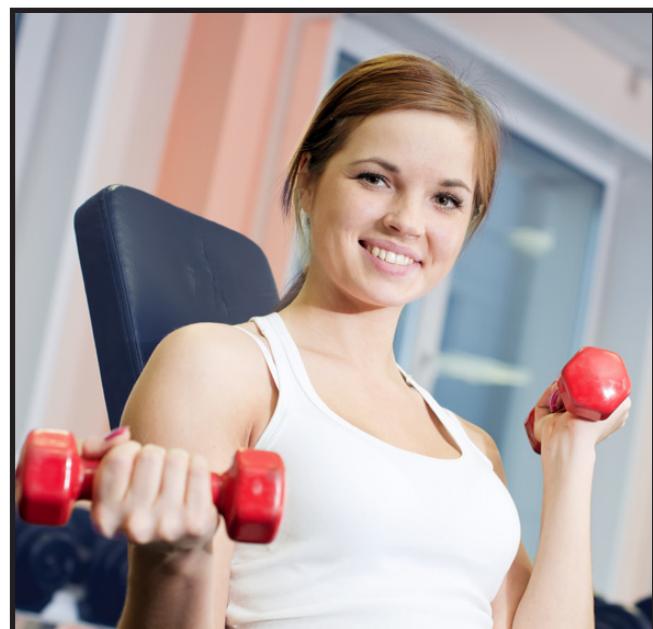


You need to move an hour (or more) per day!

Ready to step it up?

- Ask your Phys Ed teacher about aerobic exercise classes or programs, weight training and other fitness topics at school or in your community.
- Check out exercise videos at your local library.
- Start exercising in a small amount 3 days per week.
- Slowly increase the amount of time you exercise.

Try to get an hour a day, 5 or 6 days a week. Always give yourself at least one day off each week and vary your activities, so you don't get bored. Consider a visit to your health care provider before you start a more intense program. See your health care provider if you notice any physical problems as you exercise.



Already active?

Great, keep it up! Follow these pointers to stay in top form:

- Talk to your coach, trainer or health care provider if you notice aches and pains that won't go away or get worse.
- Stretch before and after exercise, but never stretch a cold muscle. Warm up for 5 to 10 minutes, stretch, exercise, cool down for 5 to 10 minutes, and stretch again.
- Avoid exercising too much. If you're in pain while you exercise, feel sick afterward or develop other physical problems due to exercise, cut down on the intensity or length of your activity.

Hydrate!

Whether you're exercising or just moving through a typical day, your body NEEDS water. It cools the body when you exercise. And it gives your cells and your brain a boost every time.

You're drinking enough water if your urine is clear. If it's not, increase the amount of water you drink.



Keep weight training healthy and safe

Weight training can build muscle and increase your strength. But before you start a weight training program:

- Meet with a qualified trainer to develop a safe weight-training program that fits your needs. Learn how to train the right way — review safe techniques.
- Use a spotter if your weight training activity requires one. Safety is key to healthy weight training.
- Be cautious about supplements, such as protein and creatine. Talk to your care team first.

Sleep

Sleep is a priority!

Most teens need between 8½ to 9½ hours of sleep each night to feel rested.

Why bother trying to get that much? Four good reasons...

1. **You'll feel better.** Healthy sleep can fight stress, improve your mood and give you energy.
2. **You'll be smarter.** When you're well rested, you can concentrate, learn, listen and think better.
3. **You'll look better.** Get enough sleep and it'll shine through in the way you look, particularly in the appearance of your skin.
4. **You'll be more alert.** Driving when you're drowsy is dangerous. Sleepiness slows reaction time, decreases awareness, impairs judgment, and increases your risk of crashing.



Want to sleep well consistently?

There are two simple steps you can take:

1. Set a consistent wake-up time & build your sleep schedule around it.
2. Give yourself time to wind down before you go to bed. (See below.)



Sleep tips

Once you have your wake-up time set, here are some other ideas that can help ensure a good night's rest ...

- **Keep your electronics (cell phone, TV and computer) out of the bedroom. Yes, seriously.**
- Stay away from pop, sugar, caffeine and big meals two to three hours before you go to bed.
- Give yourself time to wind down. Do something relaxing for a while before you go to bed. NO screen time for 30 minutes before you go to sleep!
- Don't nap. If you do take a nap once in a while, make it 30 minutes or less.

Relationships

Building strong relationships

Relationships aren't just with your "significant other." Since long before that began, you've had friends, teachers, siblings, and other relatives who have given you support, comfort, safety, and encouragement. These are the signs of a good relationship.

- **Respect. Give it. Get it.** Even when you don't agree.
- Be supportive in good times and bad. Listen with an open mind.
- When you disagree or if you feel hurt or angry about something, let the other person know. Talk about your feelings openly and calmly.
- Build trust by being honest.
- Be true to yourself and what you believe. A person who really cares about you will respect you for it.
- If you mess up, admit it, talk about it, and do what needs to be done to make it right. Then move on.
- Know that relationships don't always last. Someone who was one of your good friends in middle school might not be in high school because you've both grown and changed. That's okay.
- Look for chances to form new friendships when you can.





Eight signs of an unhealthy relationship

1. You have to endure teasing, insults or putdowns that hurt, especially if they continue after you've told the other person the comments make you feel bad.
2. You feel pressure to do things or act in ways that make you uncomfortable.
3. You feel like you can't talk honestly to the other person about how you really feel.
4. You feel like you can't trust the other person because they aren't honest with you.
5. The other person tries to control who you're friends with, what you do, how you dress, or generally bosses you around. (This one is a little different with your parents. But even though they get to have some say in your life, you should still be able to talk honestly with them and work through disagreements.)
6. The other person becomes unreasonably jealous of connections you have with your family, friends or other people in your life.
7. The other person tells you to keep the relationship a secret, or asks you to keep secrets that make you uncomfortable.
8. You feel threatened in any way.

If someone hurts you physically, emotionally or sexually, tell an adult you trust and get out of the relationship right away.

If you feel like you can't end the relationship, ask an adult for help.

Stress

Dealing with stress

When the demands of school, family, jobs, friends or activities start to pile up, it's normal to feel stressed. **Some** stress is good — it can give you the push you need to get things done. But too much stress can wear you down and drain your energy.

Set your priorities

Stress often comes from having too much to do and not enough time to do it. You can reduce your stress by figuring out what's most important to you. To put things in perspective and help you prioritize, ask yourself the following questions. Check off or write-in your answers.

1. **What's essential?** Essentials include tasks and activities that, if they don't get done, will have serious, long-term consequences on your health or your future. Make time for the essentials first.

- Going to school
- Doing my homework
- Getting enough sleep
- _____
- _____

2. **What's important to me?** These should come after the essential activities on your priority list.

- Playing sports
- Participating in school activities
- Volunteering
- Spending time with friends
- _____
- _____

3. **What's optional?** These are activities you could do without, if you had to.

- Watching TV
- Playing video games
- Chatting online
- _____
- _____



Control the clock (and manage your stress)

Time management is a big part of keeping stress under control. Try these tips to ensure that you can make time for your priorities.

1. Keep a calendar and daily and weekly to-do lists.
2. Make time to relax.
3. If your days are too full, change your priorities.
4. Plan ahead.
5. Do unpleasant tasks first to get them out of the way.
6. Give your full attention to whatever you're doing at the moment.
7. Stretch big projects over several days.
8. Avoid your e-mails, phone calls, IMs, and texts when you need to focus on a task.



Know what works for you

Are you a morning person or a night owl? Do you need downtime after school or after your evening meal? Do challenging tasks when you're most productive. Leave small jobs and no-brainers for the times when you know you're not at the top of your game.

De-stressing

Stress is real, and it will happen to everyone. To reduce its impact, try these tips.

- **Break it down.** Break big projects or tasks into smaller chunks. Getting started may give you energy to keep going!
- **Stay positive.** An optimistic outlook can boost your confidence and help you better handle stress.
- **Laugh it up.** Laughter helps release natural substances, called endorphins, into your brain. They help you feel calmer and less stressed.
- **Take a break.** Hang with your friends. Take time to relax!
- **Keep your perspective.** You don't have to do everything perfectly. You're not a failure just because you may not always accomplish all you want to.

If you find that you aren't handling stress well — if you're trying to cope by turning to drugs or alcohol, smoking, cutting yourself, skipping school, overeating, not eating enough, fighting, or running away — it's time to ask for help.

Mental health: Depression

understanding depression

There's a difference between **feeling depressed** and having a condition that can be **diagnosed as depression**.

Some days you may feel sad, cranky or blue. The pressures of school, relationships and other commitments may bother you more than usual. Those feelings are normal and usually fade within a few days.

When you feel that way, it's important to lift your spirits.

- Spend time with friends.
- Enjoy time outdoors.
- Exercise.
- Watch a funny movie.
- Read a good book.

If you continue to feel irritable or unhappy most days, and those feelings last for two weeks or more, you may have **clinical depression**. Depression is a serious and common medical condition that can affect your mood, body and thoughts. Stress and life changes can trigger depression, but sometimes people become depressed without a clear cause.

*"Depression is real. You're not imagining it.
It's a medical problem, and you may need help to treat it."
—Teen diagnosed with depression*



Get help

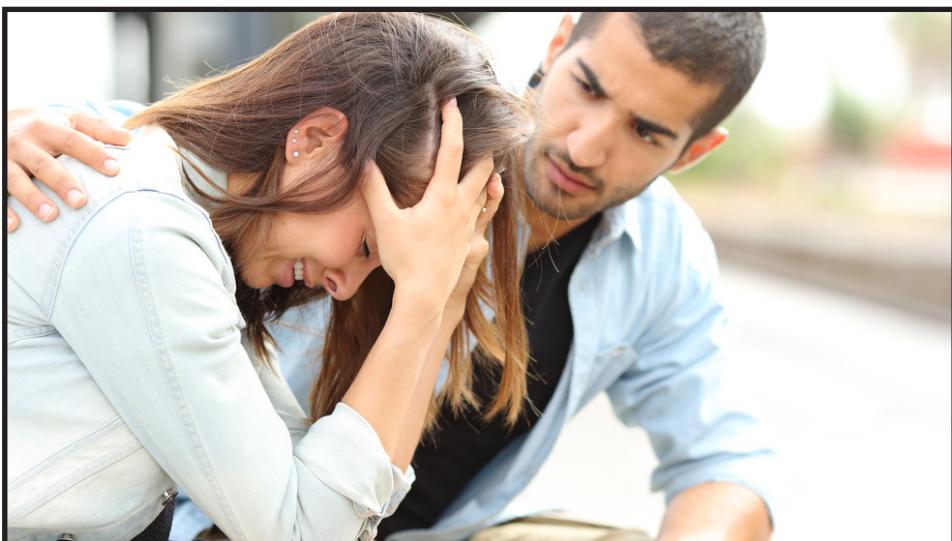
If any of the following circumstances are keeping you from enjoying life, talk to an adult you trust.

- You can't shake feelings of sadness, anxiousness or emptiness.
- You feel like there's no hope, like you're trapped with no way out.
- You're moody, and you cry or get angry easily.
- You worry all the time or have panic attacks.
- You stop caring about things you usually enjoy.
- You can't sleep or you sleep too much.
- You don't have any energy.
- You stop doing your homework or don't follow through on other responsibilities.
- You can't concentrate, and you're often restless or cranky.
- You have thoughts about hurting yourself or someone else.
- You think about dying or committing suicide.



Depression is treatable

Without treatment, depression can get worse or cause other health problems. If you have any of the symptoms listed above — especially if they lead to self-destructive thoughts or behaviors, or if they make it hard to live your daily life — you need to get professional help as soon as possible. Talk to your parents, a school counselor, a school nurse, or another trusted adult about how you're feeling. Ask for help.



Mental health: Warning signs of suicidal thoughts

Handwritten text: Suicide is one of the leading causes of death

Suicide is one of the leading causes of death among people 15 to 24 years old. If you have any of the following signs, or if you see these signs in a friend, it's time to get help.

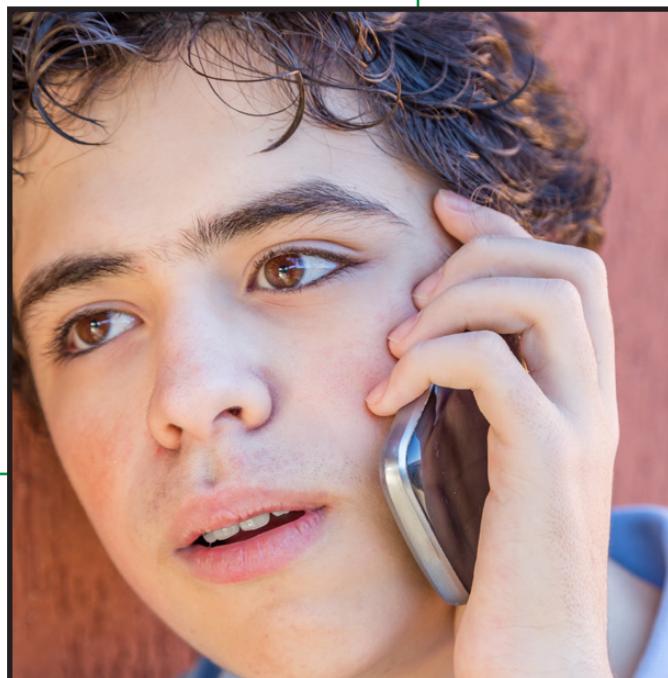
- Thinking, talking, reading, or writing about suicide or death.
- Feeling worthless or helpless.
- Displaying symptoms of severe depression, such as those listed earlier.
- Engaging in self-destructive behavior, such as self-cutting.
- Increasing use of alcohol and other drugs.
- Taking risks, such as driving recklessly or getting in physical fights.
- Buying a gun, stocking up on sleeping pills or getting other items that could be used to commit suicide.
- Giving away prized possessions.
- Thinking or talking about "getting even" with a girlfriend, boyfriend, friends, or family.

What to do?

If you think you can't live anymore or have thoughts of killing yourself, **ask for help immediately**.

Tell a trusted adult, call 911, call the suicide prevention lifeline at 988 or 1-800-273-TALK, go to a hospital emergency room or call your doctor.

If you know someone who is thinking about suicide or has attempted suicide, get help right away!



Mental health: Anxiety

Everyone gets a little worried sometimes — and that's OK

Feeling nervous, scared or worried is called anxiety. Anxiety can sometimes help you do your best at school, in sports and at home. And that's good. But...

Too much worry for too long is not good.

Feeling anxious should not keep you from doing what you want or need to do.

If you think anxiety is getting in the way of your daily life, tell your parents, doctor or someone you trust.

How do you know if your anxiety is a problem?

If you:

- Become anxious even when you are safe.
- Worry about things that will probably not happen.
- Are more afraid of something than most people.
- Feel nervous most of the time.
- Do something over and over to prevent something bad from happening.
- Avoid doing things or going places.

If you are feeling or doing any of these things, anxiety might be a problem for you.

There are effective treatments that can help!

Talk to your doctor about how you're feeling.



Mental health: Substance use and abuse

Steer clear of alcohol

- **It's illegal.** If you get caught, you could face fines, have your driver's license taken away, be suspended from school, and lose your job.
- **It makes you do dumb things.** People who've been drinking often do things that they would never do, such as getting in a car with a drunk driver, going to dangerous places, having unprotected sex, and trusting people they shouldn't.
- **It's bad for your health.** Alcohol can damage areas of your brain that are still developing, including the areas that control reasoning and decision-making. It can lead to long-term health problems too, like loss of brain cells, sexual problems, liver damage, and reproductive disorders.
- **It can kill you.** Binge drinking — having many drinks in a row — can make you drunk very quickly, and this can lead to alcohol poisoning. Excessive drinking can even kill you! Many teens die every year after choking on vomit or having breathing problems.

People who begin drinking by age 15 are five times more likely to abuse or become dependent on alcohol than those who begin drinking after age 20.

—U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Teens who begin drinking at age 16, rather than 21, double the chance they will incur or cause unintentional or alcohol-related driving injuries.

—The Journal of Pediatrics

Steer clear of tobacco

- **It's a hard habit to break.** Once you start using tobacco in ANY FORM, you can get hooked.
- **It's very expensive.**
- **It hurts your image.** Tobacco makes your clothing, hair and breath smell bad, and it stains your teeth.
- **It puts you at high-risk for health problems.** Smoking during your teens greatly increases your risk for lung cancer. It also causes heart disease, stroke and chronic lung disease, among many other health problems. Yes, tobacco can kill you!



Steer clear of illegal drugs

- **They can land you in serious trouble.** Buying or selling even small amounts of illegal drugs can lead to big trouble with the law, including arrest, fines and jail time.
- **You can get hooked on the first try!** Some drugs, like methamphetamine and cocaine, are powerfully addictive. After trying them just once, you can be addicted to them. It can be very difficult to stop using these drugs.
- **They are dangerous, the first time you try them.** Many drugs, including marijuana, cause brain damage. Seizures, heart problems, depression, liver, and kidney and lung damage are just a few of the other serious health problems that come with drugs. Illegal drugs are linked to sudden death.
- **Prescription drugs can be dangerous too!** Taking someone else's prescription drugs, or taking too many of your own prescription drugs, can be just as risky as using illegal drugs. Seizures, stroke, hallucinations, and loss of memory are just a few of the many problems associated with abusing prescription medications.

“Six people on my dorm floor got busted with marijuana. One of them was an aviation major, and he got kicked out of the program. It's scary how fast a drug bust changes things.”

— A 19-year-old college freshman



How to say NO...

Keep your response clear and direct. Try something like:

- No thanks. I don't _____ (drink/smoke/use drugs).
- I can't my parents would ground me for months.
- I can't risk getting caught and losing my _____ (scholarship/job/car/phone).
- I don't want to get kicked out of _____. (Fill in your sport or other activity.)
- I have to work tomorrow.

Your safety: Driving and Internet use

Safe driving

Driving may seem easy. But it's actually a very complicated task that can be quite hazardous. Traffic crashes are the leading cause of death for teens and young adults. To lower your risk of an accident, follow these guidelines:

- **Focus on driving.** Don't text, eat, drink, or talk on a cell phone when you drive.
- Don't let other people or loud music distract you from driving.
- Obey all traffic laws, in particular the speed limit.
- Watch for speed limit changes, especially near schools and in neighborhoods.
- Watch weather and road conditions; adjust your driving as needed.
- Slow down when you drive at night.
- **Never drink and drive.**
- Drive only when you're alert and emotionally in control. **If you feel sleepy, pull over.**

Buckle up!

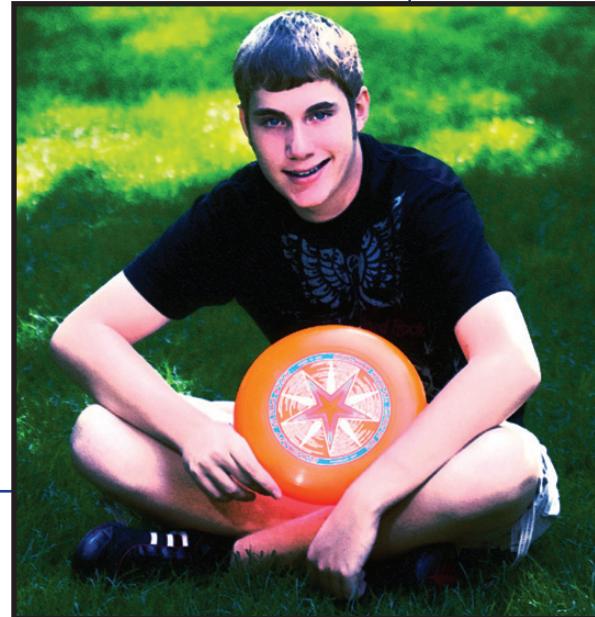
The force of **an accident at 30 miles-per-hour** is like trying to **catch a 200-pound bag of cement** thrown from a third-floor window.

Also, remember: as a driver, **you are legally responsible for everyone in your car**. Everyone has to buckle up!

Are you too tired to drive? One teen's story...

"Bryan was wearing his seatbelt and driving within the speed limit. **He wasn't being reckless. He just got tired.** It was after midnight. We think he dozed off. His truck hit an embankment, went into the air and hit an overpass. It can happen to anyone. Bryan was here one night, and the next day he wasn't."

—Girlfriend of Bryan T., who died just a few weeks after his high school graduation



Internet safety

Social networking, texts, e-mail, IMs, and face-to-face chatting are all quick, easy ways to stay connected. Unfortunately, information and images often get forwarded quickly. Once it's out there, you can't get them back, and you can't control how other people use them.

Before you put anything online or send it in a text message, think ...

- Who could see this? How will it affect their opinion of me?
- Will I regret posting this later?
- What would an employer, college admissions officer, recruiter or my family think?
- Is what I'm doing legal?

“Sexting” is against the law.

- **Think about the consequences** of taking, sending or forwarding a sexual picture of someone underage, even if it's of you. You could get kicked off sports teams, face humiliation, lose educational opportunities, and get in trouble with the law.
- **If you forward a sexual picture of anyone underage, you are just as responsible for the image as the original sender.** You could face child pornography charges, go to jail and have to register as a sex offender.
- **Report any nude pictures you receive on your cell phone** to an adult you trust. Do not delete the message, and don't send it to anyone else. Instead, get your parents or guardians, teachers or school counselors involved immediately.



Your safety: Driving and Internet use (cont.)

Internet safety

What is cyberbullying?

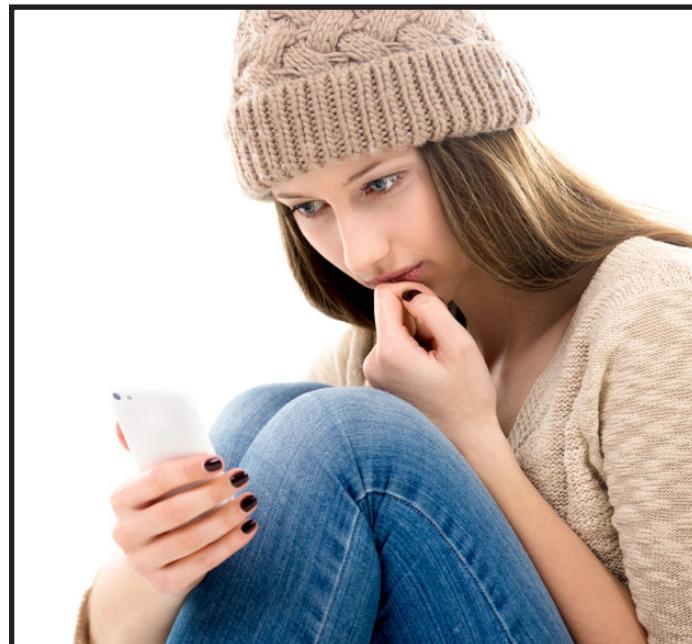
- Sending threatening or mean messages by e-mail.
- Posting nasty comments or spreading rumors online.
- Circulating embarrassing photos of someone via cell phone or Internet.

These are all forms of cyberbullying. If someone uses a computer, cell phone or another electronic device to harass, intimidate or hurt you, remember this:

You don't have to be harassed!

Follow these steps:

- Never respond to harassing or rude comments.
- Save or print evidence of cyberbullying.
- Block the person's e-mail address, instant message screen name or phone number from your computer and phone.
- Tell your parents, guardian or another adult you trust. They can help you report the problem to the Web site or cell phone service provider and, if necessary, to your school or to law enforcement.
- **Respect others online.** If it's not okay to say something in person, it's not okay to put it the Internet or in any other form of electronic messaging. Also remember, there are laws about harassment, stalking, etc.



How to protect yourself

- Always use privacy settings to limit access to your online profile.
- Use a password to protect your cell phone. Never share your password with anyone except your parents. Change passwords often.
- Don't get anyone else's password. If something happens on their account, you could be held responsible.
- Be selective about the people you allow into your social networking sites.
- Don't trust people online that you don't know in person. Don't tell them where you live, your last name or anything else personal.



Know when to get help

If any of the following happens when you're online, report it immediately:

- Someone you don't know asks you for personal information or inappropriate photos or videos.
- You receive obscene material from people or companies you don't know.
- You discover misleading URLs that direct you to sites containing inappropriate materials instead of the information you wanted.
- Anyone sends you photos or videos containing explicit content of children or teens.
- Anyone asks you for sexual activities.
- Someone you've never met in person asks to meet you.

If any of these things happens to you or to a friend, tell an adult you trust, and report it to the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children.

For more information about smart Internet surfing, check out the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children's NetSmartz Workshop.

Sexual health

The scoop on sex

When it comes to sex, most teens admit that they have more Q's than A's.

What's real? What's hype?

Some of your friends may have a lot to say about sex, and there's plenty of it in the movies and on TV. But how are you going to decide what's right for you?

- **Don't let other people or the media tell you what to think.** Decide for yourself. What do you believe? What are your family's values? What are your values? How your values fit with the choices you want to make, or have made, about sex?
- **Be informed.** Know what's normal for your body, so you'll be more likely to notice when something isn't right. Get information from reliable sources (such as this).
- **Don't give in to peer pressure.** Research has shown that roughly half of high school students have had sex. That means about half have not had sex. You're in charge of your body. You should never have sex because you feel pressured or because someone tells you "everyone else is doing it." They aren't.



If you've decided you don't want to have sex...

- Talk to your boyfriend or girlfriend about your decision, so he or she knows how you feel.
- Avoid situations that may make it more likely for you to feel pressured to have sex.
- Decide what you'll say and do if you feel pressure to have sex.
- Remember that the decision is yours to make. You're in charge of your body.

If you've decided to have sex or you're already sexually active

- Talk to your boyfriend or girlfriend about sex and birth control. How would he or she handle an unexpected pregnancy?
- Protect yourself from sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Use a condom.
- Decide on a reliable form of birth control. And USE IT!
- Remember, the decision is yours to make every time. Just because you've had sex in the past doesn't mean you have to continue having sex.



It's okay to say no!
You're the only person who can
really look out for your well-being.

Sexual health (cont.)

What about birth control?

Q: Should I use birth control?

A: YES! It's best to use two types of birth control.

- Hormonal birth control keeps a woman's body from releasing eggs.
- Condoms keep sperm from reaching eggs.

Hormonal birth control

Hormonal birth control can work well to avoid pregnancy — when the product is used correctly and consistently. But it does not protect you from STIs.

Hormonal birth control comes in different forms, including:

- Pills.
- A patch.
- A vaginal ring.
- Implants.
- An injection.
- An intrauterine device (IUD) with hormones.



Condoms

Condoms keep sperm from reaching eggs. They are also the only form of birth control that can reduce your risk of getting an STI. However, the effectiveness of a condom depends on whether it's used correctly. Because that varies per person, if you want to avoid pregnancy, you should use condoms with another form of hormonal birth control.

- **If you have sex, you need to use a new condom every time.** If you want your condom to protect you from STIs, you have to put it on before you have any sexual contact.
- **Not all condoms are the same.** Condoms made from latex or polyurethane give the best protection. "Fashion" condoms, like those that glow in the dark, and condoms made from any other materials, are not made to protect users from STIs.

Q: How can you get birth control?

A: With the exception of condoms, you need to see a health care provider and get a prescription for the birth control described here. Your health care provider can give you details on their effectiveness, as well as the pros and cons of each. In most states, you can talk to your health care provider and get a prescription for birth control without your parents knowing about it and without the need for their consent.

Q: Which type of birth control is 100% reliable?

A: NONE of these methods is 100 percent reliable. The only way to completely protect yourself from pregnancy is to not have sex.

What doesn't work...

You may have heard about some tricks to avoid pregnancy without birth control. Here are a few common ones. **None of these tricks prevent pregnancy.**

- **Pulling out before ejaculation.** Fluid with sperm in it leaks from the penis before and after ejaculation, so pregnancy can still happen even if the penis is withdrawn early.
- **Douching.** Squirting water or any other liquid into the vagina after sex doesn't kill sperm or prevent pregnancy.
- **Going to the bathroom right after sex.** Urine doesn't pass through the vagina, so urinating after sex won't get rid of sperm.
- **Using plastic wrap instead of a condom.** Plastic wrap or a plastic bag is no substitute for a condom. They can break easily and leak sperm.
- **Having sex during a period.** Pregnancy can happen anytime during a menstrual cycle. Having sex when a girl is having her period won't prevent pregnancy.
- **Having sex in a certain position.** If the penis enters, or comes close to, the vagina, pregnancy can happen. Position doesn't matter.
- **Having sex just once.** Pregnancy can happen even if you only have sex once. It can happen even if it's your first time ever having sex.

Screening exams

Every teen should see his or her doctor regularly during the teen years for general health check-ups. These visits allow you to ask questions about your health, check for possible medical problems, make sure your immunizations are up-to-date, and confirm that you're healthy overall.

If you're sexually active, it's best to have an exam by your health care provider at least once a year to screen for infections, discuss birth control and answer questions you may have about your body, reproduction or general health.

During a medical appointment, your health care provider will do a physical exam. There may be portions of the exam that are new and different than what you have experienced in the past.



Sexual health (cont.)

Sex isn't just physical...

Sex is an emotional connection too. It can change the way you feel about yourself and about the other person.

Take time to think about how sex could affect you emotionally.

Here are a few things to consider:

- Why are you having sex or considering sex? If you're getting pressure from someone else and you have sexual relations, you may not feel good about your decision later. It's not a good idea to have sex to try to keep someone you love.
- How will you feel if the other person tells friends or others at school that you had sex or shares details about it?
- If you've had sex and things don't work out, how will you feel when you see the other person at school or with someone else?



Sexually transmitted infections

Q: What are sexually transmitted infections? How often do teens get them?

A: Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) — sometimes called sexually transmitted diseases — are infections spread by sexual contact. Anyone who is sexually active can get one.

Research has shown that some STIs, such as gonorrhea and chlamydia, are more common in teens ages 15 to 19 than in any other age group.



Some STIs could kill you

Some STIs can be treated. Some STIs could stay with you for years. Some STIs can cause long-term health problems, such as infertility, cancer or AIDS.

In other words, yes, **a few minutes of unprotected sexual relations now could kill you later.** PROTECT YOURSELF.

Q: How can I avoid getting an STI?

A: The only way to completely avoid an STI is not to have sexual contact with someone else.



Sexual contact includes:

- Rubbing your bodies together without clothes.
- Masturbating together.
- Oral sex.
- Vaginal sex.
- Anal sex.

Those activities put you at risk for an STI. STIs can happen both in same-sex and opposite-sex couples. The more people you have sexual contact with, the higher your risk of an STI.

Q: Can you get an STI from oral sex?

A: YES. For example, if you or your partner has a cold sore in the mouth that's caused by a herpes virus, it can give the other person genital herpes. If you have oral sex, use a condom or a dental dam. A dental dam is a small, thin, square piece of latex that you put over the vaginal opening during oral sex.



Symptoms of STIs may include:

- No symptoms. That's why regular screening exams are so important.
- Pain when you urinate.
- Discharge from the penis.
- Abnormal vaginal discharge or bleeding.
- Fever.
- Pain in your abdomen.

If you THINK you have an STI or you DO have an STI

The advice is the same for both:

- Talk to your health care provider. STIs don't go away without treatment.
- Don't have sexual contact with anyone until your health care provider says it's safe.

Final thoughts

**Thank you for reading this.
Thank you for stopping to think about these topics.**

We know some of this information may be uncomfortable to read or talk about. Your health care team encourages you to take the time you need to make the best decision you can for yourself.

Get advice from people you respect and trust. Perhaps you can talk to a parent, older sibling, aunt, uncle, teacher, school nurse, or youth group leader. You can talk to your doctor too. Each one of those people can tell you what they would do or what they think you should do. But remember this:

**In the end, the decisions you make
are yours and only yours.**

If you have questions after you read this, contact your health care team. If you'd like to read more online about birth control and STIs, check out these websites: Mayo Clinic, Centers for Disease Control and [iwannaknow](#).

Note: Your health care provider doesn't write, sponsor or endorse these websites. They are offered to help you find general information only. Do not use information on websites to diagnose or treat yourself. If you find something you're not sure about, ask a member of your care team.



BARBARA WOODWARD LIPS PATIENT EDUCATION CENTER

Mrs. Lips, a resident of San Antonio, Texas, was a loyal Mayo Clinic patient of more than 40 years and a self-made business leader who significantly expanded her family's activities in oil, gas and ranching. Upon her death in 1995, Mrs. Lips paid the ultimate compliment by leaving her entire estate to Mayo Clinic. By naming the Barbara Woodward Lips Patient Education Center, Mayo honors her generosity, her love of learning, her belief in patient empowerment and her dedication to high-quality care.

This material is for your education and information only. This content does not replace medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. New medical research may change this information. If you have questions about a medical condition, always talk with your health care provider.

MAYO CLINIC | 200 First Street SW | Rochester, MN 55905 | mayoclinic.org

©2016 Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research. All rights reserved. MAYO, MAYO CLINIC and the triple-shield Mayo logo are trademarks and service marks of MFMER.

MC5727-02rev0722