



Teens + Confidentiality: A Parent's Guide

As children mature into their teen years, they have a few new “tasks” to accomplish regarding their health care. They need to:

- Feel responsible for their health.
- Take care of their health and their health care needs, as necessary.
- Learn to speak for themselves.
- Share information with their health care providers.
- Build trust in their health care providers.

It takes time to build these skills. Since most teens only see their usual health care provider once or twice a year, this confidence- and skills-building process needs to begin during the early teen years.

How does this affect you and your child?

Beginning when a child is about 12 or 13 years old, the health care provider may ask you (the parent or guardian) to leave the exam room so he or she can talk privately with your child. Privacy helps kids feel more comfortable. Certain topics from those conversations can be kept confidential. That means the health care provider won't share that information with anyone else, not even parents, guardians or school officials.

Beginning at age 13, minors can have a Patient Online Services account. As a parent with legal authority for health care decisions, you may request access to view and manage information for your child. Please note there is a specific, limited level of access to information for patients ages 13-17. If you have access to your child's Patient Online Services account prior to their 13th birthday, your access will automatically update to the limited access when they turn 13. Ask your child's health care provider for more information.



Common teen topics

In addition to a general talk about your child's health, some more sensitive topics may be discussed. The health care provider may give health and safety advice on topics such as:

- Birth control.
- Smoking and drugs.
- Sex and sexual behaviors.
- Gender identity and sexual orientation.
- Dating and relationships.
- Peer pressure.
- Concerns about family.
- Depression/anxiety.
- Eating disorders.

In many states teens can get certain medical services without a parent or guardian's permission. These services include:

- Reproductive health (birth control).
- Mental health.
- Chemical health.
- Sexual health.

There are some exceptions

In certain situations, the health care provider may talk about your teen's health with you or another appropriate person. This would happen:

- If they think there is a serious threat to the teen's health or to someone else's health.
- If the teen has a disease that could be passed on to another person. This is called a communicable disease. By law, health care providers have to report communicable diseases to the county public health department.
- If a member of the care team learns that the teen has been abused in any way. The provider has to report it to the county child protection services team.

A relationship based on trust

Your teen's health care providers want you and your teen to feel comfortable during these visits. They will encourage your teen to be open and honest about their health with you and/or other trusted adults. **Most importantly, they want to help your teen build a foundation of good health that will serve them for decades to come!**

If you have questions after reading this, please talk to your child's health care provider.



Teen materials available

Did you know that Mayo Clinic produces its own teen-focused brochures and videos? It's true. The materials include topics that teens ask about every week, such as:

- Puberty.
- Dating.
- Sexuality.
- Depression and anxiety.
- Relaxation skills.
- Self-harm and suicidal thoughts.
- Acne.
- Exercise.
- Smoking.
- Drinking.
- Healthy eating.
- Perfectionism.
- Anger management.

If you'd like a copy of any of these materials, ask your health care provider to show you where the patient education materials are displayed.

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.

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