

# Teens + Confidentiality

## Did you know...

that as you get older, you have more freedom to talk to your health care providers *without your parent or guardian in the room?*

It's true. For certain topics, you can speak to members of your care team and know that they will keep your questions and conversations private. This means they won't share the information with anyone, not even your parents or school officials.

### In private, you can talk to your providers about anything, including...

- 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 you can request and get some medical services confidentially, without a parent's permission. These services are in areas such as:

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

### There are some confidentiality exceptions

In certain situations, no matter what, your health care provider may have to talk about your health with an appropriate person, such as a parent. This would happen:

- If they think there is a serious threat to your health or someone else's health.
- If you have a disease that can 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 your care team learns that you have been abused in any way. He or she has to report that to the county child protection services team.

## You may have other exceptions too

- If you are over 18, you signed a form called a “Release of Information” and you put your parent’s (or guardian’s) names on the form, then they can look at your medical information. That form also allows them to talk to your health care providers about your health.
- If you are covered by your parents’ health insurance, your parents may be notified each time you see a health care provider. And they may see if you had certain tests done. This information is presented on the insurance company’s “Explanation of Benefits” form.



## A relationship based on trust

Your health care providers encourage you to be open and honest about your health with your parents and/or other trusted adults. And, they want you to know that if you have any health questions you can always reach out to them. Because your health is nothing to mess with!

**If you’re not sure which topics will be kept confidential, it’s okay to ask us about that before you begin to talk about the topic.**

## News you can use

Did you know that Mayo Clinic produces its own teen-focused brochures and DVDs? It’s true. The materials include issues 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.

**Ask your care provider to show you where the patient education materials are displayed.** You may take copies of whatever you like. No one is going to ask to see what you took. If you don’t find a topic you’re interested in, ask how you can connect with the Patient Education Center. They may have other resources on that topic. (They, too, won’t tell anyone what you ask for.)

**Your health care providers want you to feel comfortable during your visits. They want to be your healthcare support system — helping you build a foundation of good health that will serve you for decades to come!**

*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.*