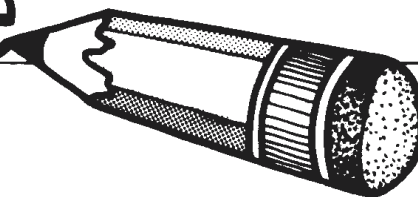


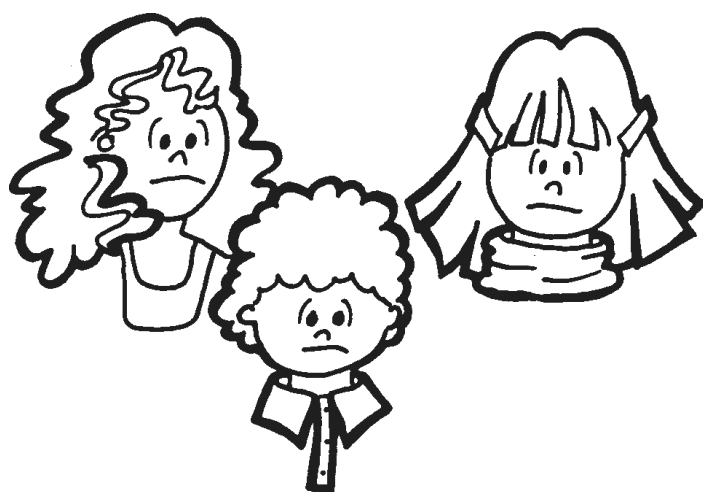
Parenting Pipeline

A newsletter for parents of sixth-grade children
from Iowa State University Extension



Welcome to Parenting Pipeline

Parents want to help their children build self-esteem, develop creativity and reach physical, social, emotional and intellectual potential. This newsletter will help you better understand your sixth-grader. It will be distributed each month of the school year.



Growing Up Quickly

You may be enjoying your role as the parent of a preteen. Many say that the 9- to 12-year-old years are the happiest years for parents. The busy caregiving times of earlier childhood are over, and the teen years are yet to come.

While you may be feeling quite comfortable in your parenting role, your preteen is going through some big life changes. Some people have identified the

10- to 12-year-old years as the most horrible time in a person's life. Your child must deal with feeling like a child and a teen at the same time!

One way parents can help their preteen through this period is by taking time to talk about physical and emotional growth and development and to help the child understand and adjust to these changes.

Preteens generally receive very limited factual information about the physical changes in their bodies. Much of their information comes from conversations with their peers, and this is often inaccurate or incomplete. They are very concerned about all the changes they are experiencing, and you are their best support.

Physical Growth

The transition is gradual enough that it is easy for parents to overlook the difficulties a child may be experiencing during rapid physical growth. Even so, changes are so great that most children feel some sort of discomfort and distress at this period of their lives.

Girls usually have their slowest year of growth in their ninth year, with a growth spurt often starting at about 10 years and peaking at about 12 years of age. Girls are apt to be taller and heavier than boys at this stage of development, and this may make girls feel large, clumsy and unattractive.

The slowest growth rate for boys is usually from age 10 to 11. Boys commonly begin their major growth spurt at about age 12. Up to this time they may feel that they are *never* going to grow.

The greatest anxiety for the preteen seems to come when the child makes peer comparisons. Assure your child that it's common for growth rates to vary. You might explain what kinds of body changes and growth can be expected. A child who knows what changes to expect will usually find it much easier to deal with the changes as they occur.

Many excellent resources are available to help parents explain human physical development to their children. Your doctor, school nurse or teachers may be able to suggest resources for you to use. Check with the local Iowa State University Extension office for specific resources available. Browse at the local bookstore. There's a wealth of information available.



Wellness

Once the days of childhood illness are past, you may not be as concerned with the health of your child. However, good diet, adequate rest and adequate exercise are necessary for normal physical development and the general wellness of your child.

The busy lifestyle of today's family makes it easy to overlook the importance of the parent taking the lead and setting guidelines that will encourage good diet, adequate rest and plenty of exercise.

A well-balanced diet can't be stressed enough. The preteen burns lots of energy, and a good supply of nutrients is important to meet the body's growth needs. Nutrients are best supplied by a variety of healthful foods. It is especially important that children at this age develop good eating patterns that will carry into the teen years.

Snacks have become an important part of many American diets. Make an effort to see that nutritious snack foods are available in your home. If your

kitchen is stocked with soda pop, cookies, chips and other minimally nutritious foods, your child will likely choose these items for snacks. Children consume many "empty calories" in after-school snacks.

Your child is most likely to choose a nutritious snack if that snack is all prepared and ready to eat. You might want to get into the habit of posting a snack list each day so your child knows what you expect her to eat. Ask her to help you select and prepare healthful snacks.

Children need rest. It's good for children to go to bed and get up about the same time each day. Regular sleeping hours and good sleep habits are beneficial for normal physical development. Most children need at least eight hours of sleep each night. They may need extra sleep as they move into a more rapid growth spurt.

Adequate exercise is important for the preteen. Children have different interests and physical abilities that influence their choice of exercise. Children who watch television a lot often don't get enough exercise. If a child isn't getting regular exercise, the parent may want to help the child find activities and develop skills that provide it.

Busy parents may feel many pressures from family and work responsibilities but should take time to visit with their children about physical growth and development. Preteens need the kind of support, love and concern that their parents are in the best position to provide.

Adapted for use in Iowa from Parenting Pipeline, North Dakota State University Extension Service, by Donna K. Donald, family life field specialist, Iowa State University Extension.

This newsletter is published for families with sixth-grade children by Iowa State University Extension. For more information about parenting education, contact your local county extension office or access the Iowa State University Extension to Families website, www.extension.iastate.edu/families.

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