

Safe kids • Healthy kids • Happy kids

Know Your Teen's Brain

Parents assume teens are “young adults” capable of making adult decisions. They blame their teen’s typical behavior on hormones. Doctors tell us, however, that the teen’s brain is only 80% mature.

A teen’s brain becomes fully developed in the mid 20’s. This accounts for the occasional angry remarks, slamming of doors and poor choices.

Teens learn quickly because they have excess gray matter and increased wiring in their brains.

Your teen:

- Is great at learning.
- Is easily influenced by his world – his peers.
- Has good motor control. Her hand-eye coordination is as good as it will ever be in her lifetime. This makes her great at computer and video games.

The skills he knows, *and continues to practice*, become sharper. The skills he does not use start to decrease. This process is called “pruning”. It helps to shape who he will become as an adult.

One of the last parts of a teen’s brain to mature is the frontal lobe. This area of the brain helps teens:

- Be able to plan,
- Control impulses,
- Organize, and
- Focus and pay attention.

A developed frontal lobe helps them manage day-to-day activities with success.

The ability to learn both good and bad and the lack of frontal lobe maturity poses a risk to your teen. He is easily influenced by his peers. He lacks the ability to control impulses. If his friends engage in risky behaviors, he may also make the same poor choices. Learned practices such as binge drinking, smoking marijuana and bullying may affect your teen even into adulthood.

Since teens are easily influenced, positive, healthy relationships help keeps them safe until their brain matures. Parents who provide love, support and guidance make a difference.

Most teens survive without a problem, even if they engage in some risky behaviors. Help your teen.

- Encourage her when she feels down. Let her know life will get better.
- Work with him to solve problems. Be open to his ideas. Share your experience.
- Have a daily plan for school, study and activities.
- Do not excuse bad behavior. Support him as he suffers the consequences of a bad choice. Teach him to make a better choice next time.
- Know your teen’s friends. Encourage her to find teens that will make healthy choices.

Brought to you by Parent Help Line and St. John’s Children’s Hospital



Call the Parent Help Line. Help is just a phone call away.
1-217-544-5808 or 1-888-727-5889, 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., 7 days a week
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