See how your baby is growing even before he or she is born!

Month 1
- The ball of cells, called a blastocyst, forms. It contains the DNA from you and your partner that will determine your baby’s sex and eye color, as well as other traits.
- Little buds appear, that will grow into your baby’s arms and legs.
- Your baby’s heart and lungs start to form.
- The neural tube begins to form and will become your baby’s brain and spinal cord.
- By 4 weeks the ball of cells becomes an embryo and is about a ¼ inch long.

Month 2
- All your baby’s major body organs, such as the heart, lungs and brain, are starting to form, but are not fully developed.
- Your baby’s heart will start to beat.
- The placenta grows in your uterus and provides food and oxygen through the umbilical cord. This will continue throughout your pregnancy.
- Your baby’s arms and legs are growing. Your baby has tiny fingers and toes. The eyelids form, but are still closed shut.

Month 3
- Your baby is starting to look more like a human and is now called a “fetus”.
- Vital organs, such as the brain, kidney, intestines and liver, are starting to function.
- Fingernails and toenails are starting to form.
- You will be able to hear your baby’s heartbeat for the first time (around 10-12 weeks).
- By the end of the third month, your baby is about 2 ½ inches long and weighs about an ounce.

Month 4
- Your baby is moving, kicking and swallowing, and can taste strong flavors in the amniotic fluid.
- Your baby can make facial expressions and may find and suck his thumb.
- The skin is pink and transparent.
- The placenta is fully formed.
- Your baby can see light, even though the eyelids are still closed.

Month 5
- Your baby is moving from side to side and sometimes head over heels. You will start to feel the baby move.
- Your baby’s sex may be detectable by ultrasound (usually between 16-20 weeks).
- Your baby can hear your heartbeat and other sounds from outside your body.
- Your baby goes to sleep and wakes up.
- By the end of the fifth month, your baby is about 8-12 inches long and weighs 1/2 to 1 pound.

Month 6
- The skin on your baby is wrinkled and red. There is fine, soft hair covering the skin.
- Your baby’s sense of movement is developing, so she can feel the motion if you dance.
- Your baby’s hearing is improving.
- Your baby’s eyelids are beginning to open.
- By the end of the sixth month, your baby is about a foot long and weighs just over a pound.

Month 7
- Your baby is practicing breathing by inhaling and exhaling amniotic fluid.
- Your baby can open and close his eyes.
- Your baby kicking and stretching.
- Eyelashes are forming. Your baby’s eyes are open and starting to blink. Eyesight improves.
Month 8

- Your baby’s brain and lungs are continuing to grow at a rapid pace.
- The fetus may be too big to move around as much, but you may still feel him kick hard and roll around.
- You may see the shape of a heel or elbow on your belly.
- Cute little fingernails and toenails have gown.
- The bones of your baby’s head are soft and flexible, which will make it easier for her to fit through the birth canal.
- By the end of the eighth month, your baby is about 18 inches long and weighs about 4 - 5 pounds.
- You should about one pound a week this month.

Month 9

- Your baby’s lungs are able to work on their own.
- Your baby gains about ¼ to 1/2 pound each week.
- The baby moves into position to be born, usually with head-down and resting lower in your belly.
- At 37 weeks, your baby is considered to be full term, however, studies have shown that your baby will do better if born after 39 weeks.
- By the end of the ninth month, your baby is ready for the outside world. The average weight of a newborn is about 7 ½ pounds. The average length is about 20 inches.

2 Months

Social & Emotional
- Begins to smile at people
- Can briefly calm himself (may bring hands to mouth and suck on hand)
- Tries to look at parent

Language & Communication
- Coos, makes gurgling sounds
- Turns head toward sounds

Cognitive
- Pays attention to faces
- Begins to follow things with eyes and recognize people at a distance
- Begins to act bored (cries, fussy) if activity doesn't change

Movement & Physical Development
- Can hold head up and begins to push up when lying on tummy
- Makes smoother movements with arms and legs

Developmental Milestones

In the first year, babies learn to focus their vision, reach out, explore, and learn about the things that are around them. Cognitive, or brain development means the learning process of memory, language, thinking, and reasoning. Learning language is more than making sounds (“babble”), or saying “ma-ma” and “da-da”. Listening, understanding, and knowing the names of people and things are all a part of language development. During this stage, babies also are developing bonds of love and trust with their parents and others as part of social and emotional development. The way parents cuddle, hold, and play with their baby will set the basis for how they will interact with them and others.

If you have questions or concerns about your child’s development, dial 1-800-505-7000 to speak to a Care Coordinator at Child Development Infoline.
Social & Emotional
- Smiles spontaneously, especially at people
- Likes to play with people and might cry when playing stops
- Copies some movements and facial expressions, like smiling or frowning

Language & Communication
- Begins to babble
- Babbles with expression and copies sounds he hears
- Cries in different ways to show hunger, pain, or being tired

Cognitive
- Lets you know if she is happy or sad
- Responds to affection
- Reaches for toy with one hand
- Uses hands and eyes together, such as seeing a toy and reaching for it
- Follows moving things with eyes from side to side
- Watches faces closely
- Recognizes familiar people and things at a distance

Movement & Physical Development
- Holds head steady, unsupported
- Pushes down on legs when feet are on a hard surface
- May be able to roll over from tummy to back
- Can hold a toy and shake it and swing at dangling toys
- Brings hands to mouth
- When lying on stomach, pushes up to elbows

Positive Parenting Tips
Following are some things you, as a parent, can do to help your baby during this time:

- Talk to your baby. She will find your voice calming.
- Answer when your baby makes sounds by repeating the sounds and adding words. This will help him learn to use language.
- Read to your baby. This will help her develop and understand language and sounds.
- Sing to your baby and play music. This will help your baby develop a love for music and will help his brain development.
- Praise your baby and give her lots of loving attention.
- Spend time cuddling and holding your baby. This will help him feel cared for and secure.
- Play with your baby when she’s alert and relaxed. Watch your baby closely for signs of being tired or fussy so that she can take a break from playing.
- Distract your baby with toys and move him to safe areas when he starts moving and touching things that he shouldn’t touch.
- Take care of yourself physically, mentally, and emotionally. Parenting can be hard work! It is easier to enjoy your new baby and be a positive, loving parent when you are feeling good yourself.
Social & Emotional
- Knows familiar faces and begins to know if someone is a stranger
- Likes to play with others, especially parents
- Responds to other people’s emotions and often seems happy
- Likes to look at self in a mirror

Language & Communication
- Responds to sounds by making sounds
- Strings vowels together when babbling (“ah,” “eh,” “oh”) and likes taking turns with parent while making sounds
- Responds to own name
- Makes sounds to show joy and displeasure
- Begins to say consonant sounds (jabbering with “m,” “b”)

Cognitive
- Looks around at things nearby
- Brings things to mouth
- Shows curiosity about things and tries to get things that are out of reach
- Begins to pass things from one hand to the other

Movement & Physical Development
- Rolls over in both directions (front to back, back to front)
- Begins to sit without support
- When standing, supports weight on legs and might bounce
- Rocks back and forth, sometimes crawling backward before moving forward

Child Safety First
When a baby becomes part of your family, it is time to make sure that your home is a safe place. Look around your home for things that could be dangerous to your baby. As a parent, it is your job to ensure that you create a safe home for your baby. It also is important that you take the necessary steps to make sure that you are mentally and emotionally ready for your new baby. Here are a few tips to keep your baby safe:
- Do not shake your baby—ever! Babies have very weak neck muscles that are not yet able to support their heads. If you shake your baby, you can damage his brain or even cause his death.
- Make sure you always put your baby to sleep on her back to prevent sudden infant death syndrome (commonly known as SIDS).
- Protect your baby and family from secondhand smoke. Do not allow anyone to smoke in your home.
- Place your baby in a rear-facing car seat in the back seat while he is riding in a car. This is recommended by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.
- Prevent your baby from choking by cutting her food into small bites. Also, don't let her play with small toys and other things that might be easy for her to swallow.
- Don't allow your baby to play with anything that might cover her face.
- Never carry hot liquids or foods near your baby or while holding him.
- Vaccines (shots) are important to protect your child’s health and safety. Because children can get serious diseases, it is important that your child get the right shots at the right time. Talk with your child’s doctor to make sure that your child is up-to-date on her vaccinations.
9 Months

Social & Emotional
- May be afraid of strangers
- May be clingy with familiar adults
- Has favorite toys

Language & Communication
- Understands “no”
- Makes a lot of different sounds like “mamamama” and “bababababa”
- Copies sounds and gestures of others
- Uses fingers to point at things

Cognitive
- Watches the path of something as it falls
- Looks for things he sees you hide
- Plays peek-a-boo
- Puts things in her mouth
- Moves things smoothly from one hand to the other
- Picks up things like cereal o’s between thumb and index finger

Movement & Physical Development
- Stands, holding on
- Can get into sitting position
- Sits without support
- Pulls to stand
- Crawls

Healthy Bodies
- Breast milk meets all your baby’s needs for about the first 6 months of life. Between 6 and 12 months of age, your baby will learn about new tastes and textures with healthy solid food, but breast milk should still be an important source of nutrition.
- Feed your baby slowly and patiently, encourage your baby to try new tastes but without force, and watch closely to see if he’s still hungry.
- Breastfeeding is the natural way to feed your baby, but it can be challenging. If you need help, you can call the National Breastfeeding Helpline at 800-994-9662 or get help on-line at http://www.womenshealth.gov/breastfeeding. You can also call your local WIC Program to see if you qualify for breastfeeding support by health professionals as well as peer counselors. Or go to http://gotwww.net/ilca to find an International Board-Certified Lactation Consultant in your community.
- Keep your baby active. She might not be able to run and play like the “big kids” just yet, but there’s lots she can do to keep her little arms and legs moving throughout the day. Getting down on the floor to move helps your baby become strong, learn, and explore.
- Try not to keep your baby in swings, strollers, bouncer seats, and exercise saucers for too long.
- Limit screen time to a minimum. For children younger than 2 years of age, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that it’s best if babies do not watch any screen media.
1 Year

Social & Emotional
- Is shy or nervous with strangers
- Cries when mom or dad leaves
- Has favorite things and people
- Shows fear in some situations
- Hands you a book when he wants to hear a story
- Repeats sounds or actions to get attention
- Puts out arm or leg to help with dressing
- Plays games such as “peek-a-boo” and “pat-a-cake”

Language & Communication
- Responds to simple spoken requests
- Uses simple gestures, like shaking head “no” or waving “bye-bye”
- Makes sounds with changes in tone (sounds more like speech)
- Says “mama” and “dada” and exclamations like “uh-oh!”
- Tries to say words you say

Cognitive
- Explores things in different ways, like shaking, banging, throwing
- Finds hidden things easily
- Looks at the right picture or thing when it’s named
- Copies gestures
- Starts to use things correctly; for example, drinks from a cup, brushes hair
- Bangs two things together
- Puts things in a container, takes things out of a container
- Lets things go without help
- Pokes with index (pointer) finger
- Follows simple directions like “pick up the toy”

Movement & Physical Development
- Gets to a sitting position without help
- Pulls up to stand, walks holding on to furniture (“cruising”)
- May take a few steps without holding on
- May stand alone

Positive Parenting Tips
Following are some of the things you, as a parent, can do to help your toddler during this time:
- Read to your toddler daily.
- Ask her to find objects for you or name body parts and objects.
- Play matching games with your toddler, like shape sorting and simple puzzles.
- Encourage him to explore and try new things.
- Help to develop your toddler’s language by talking with her and adding to words she starts. For example, if your toddler says “baba”, you can respond, “Yes, you are right— that is a bottle.”
- Encourage your child’s growing independence by letting him help with dressing himself and feeding himself.
- Respond to wanted behaviors more than you punish unwanted behaviors (use only very brief time outs). Always tell or show your child what she should do instead.
- Encourage your toddler’s curiosity and ability to recognize common objects by taking field trips together to the park or going on a bus ride.
**Social & Emotional**
- Likes to hand things to others as play
- May have temper tantrums
- May be afraid of strangers
- Shows affection to familiar people
- Plays simple pretend, such as feeding a doll
- May cling to caregivers in new situations
- Points to show others something interesting
- Explores alone but with parent close by

**Language & Communication**
- Says several single words
- Says and shakes head “no”
- Points to show someone what he wants

**Cognitive**
- Knows what ordinary things are for; for example, telephone, brush, spoon
- Points to get the attention of others
- Shows interest in a doll or stuffed animal by pretending to feed
- Points to one body part
- Scribbles on his own
- Can follow 1-step verbal commands without any gestures; for example, sits when you say “sit down”

**Movement & Physical Development**
- Walks alone
- May walk up steps and run
- Pulls toys while walking
- Can help undress herself
- Drinks from a cup Eats with a spoon

**Child Safety First**
Because your child is moving around more, he will come across more dangers as well. Dangerous situations can happen quickly, so keep a close eye on your child. Here are a few tips to help keep your growing toddler safe:

- Do NOT leave your toddler near or around water (for example, bathtubs, pools, ponds, lakes, whirlpools, or the ocean) without someone watching her. Fence off backyard pools. Drowning is the leading cause of injury and death among this age group.
- Block off stairs with a small gate or fence. Lock doors to dangerous places such as the garage or basement.
- Ensure that your home is toddler proof by placing plug covers on all unused electrical outlets.
- Keep kitchen appliances, irons, and heaters out of reach of your toddler. Turn pot handles toward the back of the stove.
- Keep sharp objects such as scissors, knives, and pens in a safe place.
- Lock up medicines, household cleaners, and poisons.
- Do NOT leave your toddler alone in any vehicle (that means a car, truck, or van) even for a few moments.
- Store any guns in a safe place out of his reach.
- Keep your child’s car seat rear-facing as long as possible. Your child should remain in a rear-facing car seat until she reaches the top height or weight limit allowed by the car seat’s manufacturer. Once your child outgrows the rear-facing car seat, she is ready to travel in a forward-facing car seat with a harness.
2 Years

Social & Emotional
- Copies others, especially adults and older children
- Gets excited when with other children
- Shows more and more independence
- Shows defiant behavior (doing what he has been told not to)
- Plays mainly beside other children, but is beginning to include other children, such as in chase games

Language & Communication
- Points to things or pictures when they are named
- Knows names of familiar people and body parts
- Says sentences with 2 to 4 words
- Follows simple instructions
- Repeats words overheard in conversation
- Points to things in a book

Cognitive
- Finds things even when hidden under two or three covers
- Begins to sort shapes and colors
- Completes sentences and rhymes in familiar books
- Plays simple make-believe games
- Builds towers of 4 or more blocks
- Might use one hand more than the other
- Follows two-step instructions such as “Pick up your shoes and put them in the closet.”
- Names items in a picture book such as a cat, bird, or dog

Movement & Physical Development
- Kicks a ball
- Stands on tiptoe
- Begins to run
- Climbs onto and down from furniture without help
- Walks up and down stairs holding on
- Throws ball overhand
- Makes or copies straight lines and circles

Healthy Bodies:
- Talk with staff at your child care provider to see if they serve healthier foods and drinks, and if they limit television and other screen time.
- Your toddler might change what food she likes from day to day. It’s normal behavior, and it’s best not to make an issue of it. Encourage her to try new foods by offering her small bites to taste.
- Keep television sets out of your child’s bedroom. Limit screen time, including video and electronic games, to no more than 1 to 2 hours per day.
- Encourage free play as much as possible. It helps your toddler stay active and strong and helps him develop motor skills.
Social & Emotional
• Copies adults and friends
• Shows affection for friends without prompting
• Takes turns in games
• Shows concern for crying friend
• Understands the idea of “mine” and “his” or “hers”
• Shows a wide range of emotions
• Separates easily from mom and dad
• May get upset with major changes in routine
• Dresses and undresses self

Language & Communication
• Follows instructions with 2 or 3 steps
• Can name most familiar things
• Understands words like “in,” “on,” and “under”
• Says first name, age, and sex
• Names a friend
• Says words like “I,” “me,” “we,” and “you” and some plurals (cars, dogs, cats)
• Talks well enough for strangers to understand most of the time
• Carries on a conversation using 2 to 3 sentences

Cognitive
• Can work toys with buttons, levers, and moving parts
• Plays make-believe with dolls, animals, and people
• Does puzzles with 3 or 4 pieces
• Understands what “two” means
• Copies a circle with pencil or crayon
• Turns book pages one at a time
• Builds towers of more than 6 blocks
• Screws and unscrews jar lids or turns door handle

Movement & Physical Development
• Climbs well
• Runs easily
• Pedals a tricycle (3-wheel bike)
• Walks up and down stairs, one foot on each step

Positive Parenting Tips
Following are some of the things you, as a parent, can do to help your preschooler during this time:
• Continue to read to your child. Nurture her love for books by taking her to the library or bookstore.
• Let your child help with simple chores.
• Encourage your child to play with other children. This helps him to learn the value of sharing and friendship.
• Be clear and consistent when disciplining your child. Explain and show the behavior that you expect from her. Whenever you tell her no, follow up with what he should be doing instead.
• Help your child develop good language skills by speaking to him in complete sentences and using “grown up” words. Help him to use the correct words and phrases.
• Help your child through the steps to solve problems when she is upset.
• Give your child a limited number of simple choices (for example, deciding what to wear, when to play, and what to eat for snack).

Developmental Milestones
How your child plays, learns, speaks, and acts offers important clues about your child’s development. Developmental milestones are things most children can do by a certain age.

If you have questions or concerns about how your child is learning, behaving or developing, dial 1-800-505-7000 to speak to a Care Coordinator at Child Development Infoline.
Social & Emotional
• Enjoys doing new things
• Plays “Mom” and “Dad”
• Is more and more creative with make-believe play
• Would rather play with other children than by himself
• Cooperates with other children
• Often can’t tell what’s real and what’s make-believe
• Talks about what she likes and what she is interested in

Language & Communication
• Knows some basic rules of grammar, such as correctly using “he” and “she”
• Sings a song or says a poem from memory such as the “Itsy Bitsy Spider” or the “Wheels on the Bus”
• Tells stories
• Can say first and last name

Cognitive
• Names some colors and some numbers
• Understands the idea of counting
• Starts to understand time
• Remembers parts of a story
• Understands the idea of “same” and “different”
• Draws a person with 2 to 4 body parts
• Uses scissors
• Starts to copy some capital letters
• Plays board or card games
• Tells you what he thinks is going to happen next in a book

Movement & Physical Development
• Hops and stands on one foot up to 2 seconds
• Catches a bounced ball most of the time
• Pours, cuts with supervision, and mashes own food

Child Safety First
As your child becomes more independent and spends more time in the outside world, it is important that you and your child are aware of ways to stay safe. Here are a few tips to protect your child:

• Tell your child why it is important to stay out of traffic. Tell him not to play in the street or run after stray balls.
• Be cautious when letting your child ride her tricycle. Keep her on the sidewalk and away from the street and always have her wear a helmet.
• Check outdoor playground equipment. Make sure there are no loose parts or sharp edges.
• Watch your child at all times, especially when he is playing outside.
• Be safe in the water. Teach your child to swim, but watch her at all times when she is in or around any body of water (this includes kiddie pools).
• Teach your child how to be safe around strangers.
• Keep your child in a forward-facing car seat with a harness until he reaches the top height or weight limit allowed by the car seat’s manufacturer. Once your child outgrows the forward-facing car seat with a harness, it will be time for him to travel in a booster seat, but still in the back seat of the vehicle. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has information on how to keep your child safe while riding in a vehicle.
Social & Emotional
- Wants to please friends
- Wants to be like friends
- More likely to agree with rules
- Likes to sing, dance, and act
- Shows concern and sympathy for others
- Is aware of gender
- Can tell what’s real and what’s make-believe
- Shows more independence (for example, may visit a next-door neighbor by himself [adult supervision is still needed])
- Is sometimes demanding and sometimes very cooperative

Language & Communication
- Speaks very clearly
- Tells a simple story using full sentences
- Uses future tense; for example, “Grandma will be here.”
- Says name and address

Cognitive
- Counts 10 or more things
- Can draw a person with at least 6 body parts
- Can print some letters or numbers
- Copies a triangle and other geometric shapes
- Knows about things used every day, like money and food

Movement & Physical Development
- Stands on one foot for 10 seconds or longer
- Hops; may be able to skip
- Can do a somersault
- Uses a fork and spoon and sometimes a table knife
- Can use the toilet on her own
- Swings and climbs

Healthy Bodies
- Eat meals with your child whenever possible. Let your child see you enjoying fruits, vegetables, and whole grains at meals and snacks. Your child should eat and drink only a limited amount of food and beverages that contain added sugars, solid fats, or salt.
- Limit screen time for your child to no more than 1 to 2 hours per day of quality programming, at home, school, or child care.
- Provide your child with age-appropriate play equipment, like balls and plastic bats, but let your preschooler choose what to play. This makes moving and being active fun for your preschooler.

Child Development Infoline
2-1-1 Child Development Infoline (CDI) takes great pride in working individually with families to understand their needs, connect them to the best services available, and follow up to ensure their needs are being met.

CDI Care Coordinators are available by phone to help with:

General child development
- Challenging behaviors
- Disability and health related issues
- Pregnancy supports
- And more…
6 – 8 Years

Social & Emotional
- Show more independence from parents and family.
- Start to think about the future.
- Understand more about his or her place in the world.
- Pay more attention to friendships and teamwork.
- Want to be liked and accepted by friends.

Thinking & Learning
- Show rapid development of mental skills.
- Learn better ways to describe experiences and talk about thoughts and feelings.
- Have less focus on one’s self and more concern for others.

Positive Parenting Tips

Following are some things you, as a parent, can do to help your child during this time:

- Show affection for your child. Recognize her accomplishments.
- Help your child develop a sense of responsibility—ask him to help with household tasks, such as setting the table.
- Talk with your child about school, friends, and things she looks forward to in the future.
- Talk with your child about respecting others. Encourage him to help people in need.
- Help your child set her own achievable goals—she’ll learn to take pride in herself and rely less on approval or reward from others.
- Help your child learn patience by letting others go first or by finishing a task before going out to play. Encourage him to think about possible consequences before acting.
- Make clear rules and stick to them, such as how long your child can watch TV or when she has to go to bed. Be clear about what behavior is okay and what is not okay.
- Do fun things together as a family, such as playing games, reading, and going to events in your community.
- Get involved with your child’s school. Meet the teachers and staff and get to understand their learning goals and how you and the school can work together to help your child do well.
- Continue reading to your child. As your child learns to read, take turns reading to each other.
- Use discipline to guide and protect your child, rather than punishment to make him feel bad about himself. Follow up any discussion about what not to do with a discussion of what to do instead.
- Praise your child for good behavior. It’s best to focus praise more on what your child does (“you worked hard to figure this out”) than on traits she can’t change (“you are smart”).
- Support your child in taking on new challenges. Encourage her to solve problems, such as a disagreement with another child, on her own.
- Encourage your child to join school and community groups, such as a team sports, or to take advantage of volunteer opportunities.
**Social & Emotional**
- Start to form stronger, more complex friendships and peer relationships. It becomes more emotionally important to have friends, especially of the same sex.
- Experience more peer pressure.
- Become more aware of his or her body as puberty approaches. Body image and eating problems sometimes start around this age.

**Thinking & Learning**
- Face more academic challenges at school.
- Become more independent from the family.
- Begin to see the point of view of others more clearly.
- Have an increased attention span.

**Positive Parenting Tips**

Following are some things you, as a parent, can do to help your child during this time:

- Spend time with your child. Talk with her about her friends, her accomplishments, and what challenges she will face.
- Be involved with your child’s school. Go to school events; meet your child’s teachers.
- Encourage your child to join school and community groups, such as a sports team, or to be a volunteer for a charity.
- Help your child develop his own sense of right and wrong. Talk with him about risky things friends might pressure him to do, like smoking or dangerous physical dares.
- Help your child develop a sense of responsibility—involve your child in household tasks like cleaning and cooking. Talk with your child about saving and spending money wisely.
- Meet the families of your child’s friends.
- Talk with your child about respecting others. Encourage her to help people in need. Talk with her about what to do when others are not kind or are disrespectful.
- Help your child set his own goals. Encourage him to think about skills and abilities he would like to have and about how to develop them.
- Make clear rules and stick to them. Talk with your child about what you expect from her (behavior) when no adults are present. If you provide reasons for rules, it will help her to know what to do in most situations.
- Use discipline to guide and protect your child, instead of punishment to make him feel badly about himself.
- When using praise, help your child think about her own accomplishments. Saying “you must be proud of yourself” rather than simply “I’m proud of you” can encourage your child to make good choices when nobody is around to praise her.
- Talk with your child about the normal physical and emotional changes of puberty.
- Encourage your child to read every day. Talk with him about his homework.
- Be affectionate and honest with your child, and do things together as a family.
**Social & Emotional**

- Show more concern about body image, looks, and clothes.
- Focus on themselves; going back and forth between high expectations and lack of confidence.
- Experience more moodiness.
- Show more interest in and influence by peer group.
- Express less affection toward parents; sometimes might seem rude or short-tempered.
- Feel stress from more challenging school work.
- Develop eating problems.
- Feel a lot of sadness or depression, which can lead to poor grades at school, alcohol or drug use, unsafe sex, and other problems.

**Thinking & Learning**

- Have more ability for complex thought.
- Be better able to express feelings through talking.
- Develop a stronger sense of right and wrong.

**Healthy Bodies**

- Encourage your teen to be physically active. She might join a team sport or take up an individual sport. Helping with household tasks such as mowing the lawn, walking the dog, or washing the car also will keep your teen active.
- Meal time is very important for families. Eating together helps teens make better choices about the foods they eat, promotes healthy weight, and gives your family members time to talk with each other.
- Limit screen time for your child to no more than 1 to 2 hours per day of quality programming, at home, school, or afterschool care.

**Child Safety First**

You play an important role in keeping your child safe no matter how old he or she is. Here are a few tips to help protect your child:

- Make sure your teen knows about the importance of wearing seatbelts. Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death among 12- to 14-year-olds.
- Encourage your teen to wear a helmet when riding a bike or a skateboard or using inline skates; riding on a motorcycle, snowmobile, or all-terrain vehicle; or playing contact sports. Injuries from sports and other activities are common.
- Talk with your teen about the dangers of drugs, drinking, smoking, and risky sexual activity. Ask him what he knows and thinks about these issues, and share your thoughts and feelings with him. Listen to what she says and answer her questions honestly and directly.
- Talk with your teen about the importance of having friends who are interested in positive activities. Encourage her to avoid peers who pressure her to make unhealthy choices.
- Know where your teen is and whether an adult is present. Make plans with him for when he will call you, where you can find him, and what time you expect him home.
- Set clear rules for your teen when she is home alone. Talk about such issues as having friends at the house, how to handle situations that can be dangerous (emergencies, fire, drugs, sex, etc.), and completing homework or household tasks.
**Social & Emotional**
- Have more interest in the opposite sex.
- Go through less conflict with parents.
- Show more independence from parents.
- Have a deeper capacity for caring and sharing and for developing more intimate relationships.
- Spend less time with parents and more time with friends.
- Feel a lot of sadness or depression, which can lead to poor grades at school, alcohol or drug use, unsafe sex, and other problems.

**Positive Parenting Tips**

Following are some things you, as a parent, can do to help your teen during this time:
- Talk with your teen about her concerns and pay attention to any changes in her behavior. Ask her if she has had suicidal thoughts, particularly if she seems sad or depressed. Asking about suicidal thoughts will not cause her to have these thoughts, but it will let her know that you care about how she feels. Seek professional help if necessary.
- Show interest in your teen’s school and extracurricular interests and activities and encourage him to become involved in activities such as sports, music, theater, and art.
- Encourage your teen to volunteer and become involved in civic activities in her community.
- Compliment your teen and celebrate his efforts and accomplishments.
- Show affection for your teen. Spend time together doing things you enjoy.
- Respect your teen’s opinion. Listen to her without playing down her concerns.
- Encourage your teen to develop solutions to problems or conflicts. Help your teenager learn to make good decisions. Create opportunities for him to use his own judgment, and be available for advice and support.
- If your teen engages in interactive internet media such as games, chat rooms, and instant messaging, encourage her to make good decisions about what she posts and the amount of time she spends on these activities.
- If your teen works, use the opportunity to talk about expectations, responsibilities, and other ways of behaving respectfully in a public setting.
- Talk with your teen and help him plan ahead for difficult or uncomfortable situations. Discuss what he can do if he is in a group and someone is using drugs or under pressure to have sex, or is offered a ride by someone who has been drinking.
- Respect your teen’s need for privacy.
- Encourage your teen to get enough sleep and exercise, and to eat healthy, balanced meals.

**Thinking & Learning**
- Learn more defined work habits.
- Show more concern about future school and work plans.
- Be better able to give reasons for their own choices, including about what is right or wrong.