

Healthy Teens

October 2019 Parent Newsletter

Nurture with Nature

Reconnecting teens with nature has been shown to help them focus in school, boost a positive attitude and increase physical activity. Youth are certainly losing touch with outdoors – a Canadian study shows that the number of children and youth who play outside at school decreases from 87% to 17% between grades 3 and 11. Seventy percent of youth spend an hour or less outdoors daily.

The effects of exposing and connecting teens to nature are widespread and valuable. Older children who spend more time outside are not only more physically active but also have healthier body weights. Physical activity in outdoor environments improves mental health even more than in other settings and this makes less irritable teenagers.

These improvements in mood and outlook can contribute to better body image and self-esteem. Consistent, positive relationships also exist between students' exposure to nature, test scores and graduation rates.

How parents can help:

- Involve your teen in planning—hikes, kayaking, snowshoeing, cross country skiing, camping.



A personal investment is a powerful way to help connect teens to the natural world around them.

- A garden of their own can help provide youth with structure as they compete with pressures from all areas of their lives. Control over what gets cultivated and maintenance of the fruits of their labor offers both physical and mental outlets.
- Advocate for more time outside for your teens at school, be it through extra gym classes outside or making outdoor learning a part of other class lessons.

➤ For more information and ideas, visit the Children and Nature Network at www.childrenandnature.org

Articles

Nurture with Nature

5 Tips on Talking About Sexual Health with Your Teen

World Mental Health Day

October 10th is World Mental Health Day. You can use this day as an opportunity to check in with your teen and see how they are doing. Asking every day questions can help such as: “How was your day?” or “What was the most challenging thing you did today?”

To learn more about mental health, visit <http://www.sickkidscmh.ca/ABC/Parent-Resource/Welcome>



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5 Tips on Talking About Sexual Health with Your Teen

Talking about sexual health topics like puberty, consent, reproduction and relationships will help your teen make healthy, informed decisions now and later on. Here are some tips for starting or having conversations about sexual health:

1. **It's never too late to begin talking.** Even if you haven't talked much about sexuality with your teen yet, find a place to begin. Settings that don't require direct eye contact – car rides, walks, washing the dishes – can lead to open, meaningful conversations.
2. **Have more conversations.** Create opportunities where your teen can ask a question or make a comment. If you can't answer immediately, plan to come back to the conversation more than once to build and reinforce information and answer additional questions.
3. **Watch for teachable moments.** These moments can happen when you least



- expect them. You may hear lyrics to a song, watch a TV show together, or your teen may tell you a story about someone at school. Ask their opinion, and use it as an opportunity to talk about sexual health and healthy choices.
4. **Encourage your teen to talk about what they think.** An open exchange of ideas can help clarify the values you each hold. Whatever they tell you, remember that they are trusting you with this information. Try to make the most out of the situation by remaining calm and being understanding.
5. **Speak to them as a mature person.** Respect their views and make sure they understand that their feelings are their feelings, whether or not you agree or understand. Use correct terms to show that you respect their age and knowledge.