

# Teen Talk



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## Obesity and Teens — By Erica

Obesity has received a lot of media attention recently. According to the CDC, a total of 12.5 million people between the ages of 2 and 19 are obese or overweight. Obesity is a major health concern because it increases your risk of getting conditions such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes, some cancers, high blood pressure, and emotional problems such as low self-esteem. Becoming overweight or obese is caused by eating more calories than you're burning off. A person's risk of becoming overweight or obese is influenced by behavioral, environmental, and genetic factors.



If you're a teen and you're not obese, you might not think this is relevant to you, but healthy eating habits and exercise are important even if you're thin. Eating healthy foods and doing physical activity now is a great way to prevent weight and health problems in the future. As you get older, your body changes and your metabolism slows down. So, if you practice unhealthy eating habits as a teen, you put yourself at risk for health problems as an adult. There is good news though; if you're currently overweight or obese and you improve your eating habits and get regular physical activity, you'll improve your overall health and dramatically decrease your chances of having health problems when you're older.

*Some tips to keep in mind:*

- A healthy diet should be made up of a variety of nutrient-dense foods (*foods that are high in vitamins, minerals, and/or fiber such as fruits, vegetables, beans, nuts, whole-grains, and dairy*).
- Eat foods that are low in fats and added sugars, and limit your intake of saturated and trans fats, cholesterol, added sugars, sodium, and alcohol.
- Build physical activity into your daily routine; for example, take a walk instead of riding the bus, and reduce the amount of time you spend watching TV or using the computer.
- Eat when you're hungry, stop when you're satisfied, and avoid eating out of boredom.



## Think Before You Drink — By Christina

Alcohol can influence a teen's decision to have sex. Family and personal values play key roles, but unfortunately, so does underage drinking. Approximately 12.5 million teens drink each year, and according to the Federal Trade Commission, teens who drink are twice as likely to engage in some kind of sexual activity. When you drink, alcohol "takes over your personality" by impairing your thoughts and slowing down your reaction time, making it difficult to think clearly and make good decisions. Being "under the influence" affects your judgment, which can make you more

likely to become involved in risky sexual behaviors.

Have you ever observed someone who's been drinking? You'll probably notice that their behavior changes. For example, they might do risky things that they would never think of doing when they're sober. That's because alcohol affects every organ in the body - including the brain. Drinking affects a person's ability to make good decisions, which can lead to someone consenting to have sex when they're not ready, or engaging in sexual activity with a stranger, or with multiple partners. When teens drink, they're less likely to use protection, and that means a higher risk of getting an STD and/or becoming pregnant. There are many reasons not to drink alcohol before you turn 21. The best solution is to not drink, and to be the person who steps in to protect friends when alcohol puts them in an unsafe situation.



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# Quiz Your Brain: Dental Health

— By Kayla

Take this quiz to see how informed you are about your dental health. It might also help you realize that you have an important role in keeping your mouth healthy and preventing gum disease. Check out the answers (*upside down*) below.

**1. It's important to brush your teeth:**

- A) At least once a day
- B) At least twice a day
- C) After every meal
- D) Both B and C

**2. You should change your toothbrush:**

- A) Every three months
- B) Once a year
- C) Every three months or sooner if you're sick with the flu, cold, or mouth infection
- D) Once a year or sooner if you're sick with the flu, cold, or mouth infection

**3. You can get gum disease if the following aren't regularly removed from your teeth:**

- A) Plaque and tartar
- B) Food and tartar
- C) Plaque and food
- D) Food and bacteria

**4. It's important to brush your teeth for at least:**

- A) 30 seconds
- B) 1 minute
- C) 2 minutes
- D) 3 minutes

**5. Your risk of getting a cavity can be affected by:**

- A) Your dental hygiene
- B) Your eating habits and lifestyle
- C) Fluoride in water and toothpaste
- D) All of the above

**6. All of the following prevent bad breath except:**

- A) Smoking and chewing tobacco
- B) Flossing your teeth everyday
- C) Brushing your teeth everyday
- D) Both A and B



Answers: 1: D, 2: C, 3: A, 4: C, 5: D, 6: A

## Could You Be Depressed?

— By Alexa



Some people confuse sadness with depression. Feeling sad from time to time is *normal* and doesn't necessarily mean you're depressed. It's natural to feel sad after a breakup, or when someone close to you dies. It's also perfectly normal to feel down in the dumps or disappointed in yourself for not making the cut for a sports team or not passing a class in school. However, people are usually able to deal with their feelings and move past their sadness with the support from family and friends, and a little time.

Depression, on the other hand, affects a person's feelings, behaviors, and thoughts over a long period of time. Someone who is depressed experiences negative feelings and sometimes physical symptoms for *at least two weeks*. Not everyone has the same symptoms of depression, because depression can affect people differently. Some people may not even know they're depressed, but people close to them might sense there is something wrong. Depression in teens often looks different from depression in adults. Teens who are struggling emotionally may suddenly get poor grades, miss a lot of school, withdraw from their friends, have low self-esteem, and feel worthless. These behaviors may lead to adults assuming that a teen is a trouble-maker or has a bad attitude when in fact they're actually depressed.

No one knows for sure what causes depression, but certain factors put a person at risk, such as: a family history of depression, experiencing a major loss or crisis, poor self-esteem, or feeling alone. There are many circumstances that can lead to feelings of depression.

The bottom line is this; if you or someone you know feels sad for over two weeks, it's important to find out why. There are people who care, and treatment for depression is available. A trusted adult such as a parent, guardian, teacher, guidance counselor, health care provider or clergy person can help you, a friend, or a family member find the right treatment.

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