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Eleven Years *Parent Handout*

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Vaccines Today:

- **Tdap**— this vaccine contains booster doses of Tetanus, Diphtheria and Pertussis (Whooping Cough)
- **Menactra**— this vaccine protects against meningococcal meningitis— a serious bacterial form of meningitis

It is recommended that all adolescents receive HPV vaccine. This vaccine protects your child against Human Papilloma Virus, a common cause of cancer. I will give you some information today so that you can read more about it. If you have any questions, or concerns, let me know!

Your Baby is Growing Up!

Welcome to the “tween” years! If you haven’t already begun to experience the growing pains of adolescence, you soon will. Your child will begin to change both physically and emotionally in dramatic steps over the next few years. By eleven, girls will often begin to start to show signs of breast development, although some girls start as early as 9 or 10. Boys’ pubertal development will begin around 11-13. Along with the physical changes come emotional changes. Moodiness, exasperation (aka eye rolling), etc. will become more frequent, but hopefully increased responsibility and logical thinking will as well. Your new adolescent will begin to push the boundaries of independence— wanting to do things her way with whom she wants. Get ready to say those words you hated: “Because I said so, that’s why!” or “I don’t care if everyone else is doing it— you’re NOT!” Mastering negotiating skills will become the main focus of your adolescent soon, so be prepared. Set clear expectations of what is to be allowed, and give some basic explanation as to your decision. He is old enough to understand why you are concerned about certain activities he may want to do, but remember that you are in charge. Think through your “threats”, be consistent and follow through with the consequences of not following the rules. Don’t be afraid to talk with other parents and find out what they are allowing their child to do. Not only will it help ensure parents are all on the same page, it lets the kids know you are a united front on what’s allowed. If you’re not comfortable, it’s ok to say no!

Safety

Accidents are the leading cause of death in children. Keeping your child safe becomes more challenging as she begins to exert her independence, especially in motor vehicles. The safest place in a car for your 11 year old is the back seat. The CDC recommends that children not ride in the front seat until they are 13 years of age, over 80 pounds and are at least 58 inches in height. Air bag deployment can cause fatal injuries in children in the front seat if they are not tall enough. Make sure he wears a helmet when riding any open motorized vehicle and uses appropriate protective equipment for sports and recreation activities. Reinforce personal safety by being a good example for your child! In addition, many 11 year olds may have enough maturity to stay alone at home for short periods. Make sure she is aware of emergency procedures and the do’s and don’ts of being at home alone.



Nutrition and Exercise

As your child becomes more independent, he will begin to make more choices about what he eats. It is now more important than ever to provide healthy foods at home. Get her involved in the shopping and cooking. Support him eating lunch at school or ensure he is packing some healthy options in his lunch box. It can often seem overwhelming, but by concentrating on just one or two strategies, you can help your child's overall nutrition dramatically. Try one of these: switch from soft drinks to water, choose whole grains, avoid processed foods or avoid junk food. Even a small change can make a huge difference!

It's recommended that children get 60 minutes of exercise every day. If your child is not involved in group activities, this gets more difficult as they become less likely to play with Tonka trucks or swing for hours outside. Encourage him to ride his bike after school, take the dog for a walk around the block or throw a ball around. Exerting physical energy after a long school day helps her get in a better frame of mind for homework!

Studies have shown that children who eat meals together as a family without distraction are a healthier weight than those who don't, so turn off the TV or computer and all sit down together at least once or twice a week. [Breakfast counts!]

Emotional Well-Being

Social interactions and self-esteem are the key elements of early adolescent development. Being with same-sex peers and their acceptance becomes an all important activity which can influence self-esteem. Research shows kids who feel connected to their school are motivated to achieve academically, so encourage participation in music, art, clubs or sports. Healthy emotional development is centered around your child's ability to cope with stressful situations. This involves him learning strategies to problem-solve through stress, relying on others for support, and learning how to "bounce back". How to help? The most important thing you can do is stay connected with your pre-teen by spending time together and simply talking about her worries. This has been shown to result in decreased risk-taking behavior, improved school performance and higher self-esteem in young adolescents. If you feel your child is having difficulty dealing with stress or his emotions, let's discuss today.

Internet and Social Media



There is no denying that today's tween is connected to friends and the world through technology more than any previous generation. While they may be comfortable with it, especially social media, their lack of maturity and life experiences can quickly get them into trouble. It is important that as parents we not only monitor who our children are interacting with through social media, but what they are accessing. Here are some recommendations from the AAP:

- *Let your child know you will be monitoring his texts, websites visited and images viewed. Consider formal software to monitor them— these are available in many forms and are easily available and relatively inexpensive.*
- *Create a strategy for monitoring your child's online social media use. Did you know you must legally be 13 to have social media accounts?*
- *Make sure she understands that everything she sends over the internet or with a cell phone can be shared with the entire world, so it is important that she use good judgment when sending messages and pictures.*
- *Set limits for internet and cell phone use. Watch for warning signs of trouble— is he online when she should be sleeping, eating, doing homework or participating in school activities?*

Finally, remember that actions speak louder than words. Reflect on your own use of technology and how your tween sees it. Do you ever text and drive? Do you turn off your phone for family meals or homework time? Showing our kids responsible use of technology is the best way for them to understand what's right and wrong.