

SESSION 12

Making the Most of Talking to Medical Providers

Objectives

1. Participants will be able to generate a list of common questions that health care providers ask adolescents.
2. Participants will be able to recognize the benefits of communicating openly and honestly with their health care providers.
3. Participants will be able to develop a list of strategies they can use to act as their own health advocate.

Key Questions

1. What do you think doctors and nurses mean when they ask if you are sexually active?
2. What do you think it means that adolescents have the right to confidential care?
3. When are doctors and nurse obligated to tell someone else something you told them (to break confidentiality)?
4. How can being open and honest with doctors and nurses help keep you safe and healthy during adolescence and into adulthood?

Takeaway

During adolescence, visits to the doctor often begin to look and feel different than they did when you were younger. A doctor's visit might include a physical exam of the breasts and/or genitals, and medical providers may begin to ask questions that seem very personal. It is in your best interest to be honest with your medical providers, so that they can help you get the health care you need. By law, medical providers must keep anything an adolescent says while in the medical office confidential. Even so, it can be beneficial to include parents, caregivers, and other trusted adults in conversations about your health and well-being, as long as it is safe to do so.

Vocabulary

Confidential care
Confidentiality
Health care provider
Last menstrual period
Sexually active

Find Someone Who... (Whole group, 10–15 minutes)

Purpose: Build connectedness among participants with a medium-risk activity that normalizes the adolescent experience of talking with a health care provider.

Materials for each participant: One Find Someone Who...Handout, Pen or pencil



Do

1. Provide each participant with a Find Someone Who...Handout and a pen or pencil and allow 5 to 7 minutes for participants to move around the room looking for other participants who can answer “yes” to each question on the handout. A participant who can answer “yes” should write his or her name in the box.
2. After 5 to 7 minutes, ask participants to share the names they have written in each of the boxes.

Best Practice

Turn the activity into a healthy competition; award a small social prize to the participant with the highest number of signatures or the participant who completes his or her handout first.

Ask

What is your experience usually like when you see a doctor or nurse?

Has your experience changed at all in the last few years? How has it changed?

Say

At your age, your visits to a health care provider will begin to look and feel a little different.

The physical exam may include examining your breasts or genitals, the doctor or nurse may want to speak to you in private, and they may start asking you questions they have never asked you before.

In today’s session, we will explore how young people can make the most of talking to medical professionals.

In the next activity, we will discover some of the common questions doctors and nurses ask preteens and teenagers and consider why they might ask those questions.

Sticking to My Values

Directions: Walk around the room and find one person who can answer "Yes" for each box.
Write that person's name in the box. Try to fill up the entire page.

<p>Has made his or her own doctor's appointment.</p>	<p>Has gotten a shot (vaccine) in the past six months.</p>	<p>Loves going to the doctor.</p>
<p>Wants to be a doctor or a nurse when he or she grows up.</p>	<p>FREE SPACE</p>	<p>Hates going to the doctor.</p>
<p>Has seen the same doctor since he or she was a baby.</p>	<p>Leaves his or her parents or caregivers in the waiting room before going into the exam room.</p>	<p>Has ever asked a doctor a question about his or her health.</p>
<p>Gets embarrassed about taking off his or her clothes at a doctor's visit.</p>	<p>Gets a check-up every year.</p>	<p>Knows what doctors mean when they ask if a young person is "sexually active."</p>

FOR: Find Someone Who...

WHAT: Find Someone Who...Handout

Curious Questions (Pairs, 15–20 minutes)

Purpose: Increase competence to ask and answer questions during a medical appointment.

Materials for each pair: One set of Curious Questions that are cut into strips and placed in a sealed envelope



Do

1. Provide each pair with a set of Curious Questions sealed inside an envelope. Allow 1 to 2 minutes for each pair to open their envelopes and take out one slip of paper at random, read the question, and discuss why they think a doctor or nurse would want to know this information.
2. After 1 to 2 minutes, each pair shares their Curious Question and why they think a doctor or nurse would want to know this information.
3. After all groups have shared, participants leave the envelope where they are, switch partners, find a new envelope, and continue until all Curious Questions have been covered or time runs out.

Best Practice:

Encourage participants to pick a new partner each time they pair up.

Use a bell or alarm to indicate when time is up, or establish a quiet signal before facilitating the activity to pause discussions quickly and announce that it is time to share.

Ask

What do you think doctors and nurses mean when they ask if you are sexually active?

What do you think it means that adolescents have the right to confidential care?

When are doctors and nurses obligated to tell someone else something you told them (to break confidentiality)?

How can being open and honest with doctors and nurses help keep you safe and healthy during adolescence and into adulthood?

Curious Questions (Continued)

Say

Doctors and nurses have a duty to assess your risk for pregnancy and STDs and make sure you have access to birth control or STD testing and treatment if you need it.

Doctors and nurses do not need too much detail about your sexual experience, but if you have engaged in any behavior that could result in a pregnancy or STD infection, be honest so that they can help.

Confidential care means that doctors and nurses cannot tell anyone else anything that you tell them.

Doctors and nurses will only break confidentiality if they think a young person is in danger or being hurt or if they are going to hurt themselves or someone else.

In most states, doctors and nurses have a duty to provide confidential care to adolescents for “sensitive matters,” including sexual health, drug and alcohol abuse, and eating disorders and other mental health issues.

In the next activity, we will explore more options for how young people can make the most of talking to medical professionals.

Extension Activity

In pairs, ask participants to write an advice column article explaining to someone their age why doctors ask some of these questions and how a young person should answer to get the most benefit out of the visit.

Notes



Directions for Instructor: Cut each question into an individual strip and place a full set of Curious Questions into a sealed envelope for each pair of participants.

When did your breasts begin to develop?

Do you have any concerns about how your genitals are developing?

Have you experienced nocturnal emissions (ejaculating while sleeping, either accompanied by a sexual dream or not)?

Have you noticed increased vaginal discharge? When do you notice it? What does it look like?
Have you noticed any odor?

Have you begun menstruating? When was your last menstrual period?

Have you ever used any drugs? Have you ever tried drinking alcohol? If yes, what have you tried and how often?

Do you smoke cigarettes or use any other form of tobacco? If yes, what do you use and how often?

Are you sexually active?

Are you dating? What are your relationships usually like? How long do they last?

How are things going with your friendships and relationships with your peers?

What do you normally eat for breakfast, lunch, and dinner?

Do you exercise or play sports? What do you do and how often do you do it?

Directions for Instructor: Cut each question into an individual strip and place a full set of Curious Questions into a sealed envelope for each pair of participants.

Do you ever feel so sad that you want to hurt yourself? Have you ever tried hurting yourself?
Have you ever been successful?

How are things going at school? How are your grades this year?

How is your relationship with your parents or caregivers?

How do you feel about your weight or about how your body looks?

How often do you ride in a car and not use a seatbelt?

How often do you ride in a car with someone who has been drinking alcohol or using drugs?

Story Cubes (Small groups, 15–20 minutes)

Purpose: Increase confidence to communicate openly and honestly with medical providers and act as a medical advocate on their own behalf.

Increase confidence among participants to become their own medical advocates and communicate openly and honestly with health care providers.

Materials for each small group: One full set of Story Cubes



Do

1. Post the Story Cube Sentence at the front of the room, and provide each small group with a set of Story Cubes.
2. One participant in each small group begins by rolling each of the Story Cubes in order to tell his or her “story.”
3. Activity continues until each participant in the group has told his or her own “story” about going to the doctor.

Story Cube Sentence

I went to the doctor. Before I went I [roll Story Cube #1]. When I got there I [roll Story Cube #2]. The doctor asked me [roll Story Cube #3]. When I left the office I felt [roll Story Cube #4].

Best Practice

Print each numbered story cube on a different color of paper.

Ask

Which parts of the stories were familiar based on your experience?

What might young people want to ask a doctor or nurse that you did not hear in any of the stories?

What might a doctor or nurse ask an adolescent?

What can doctors and nurses help you with that friends, parents, caregivers, and the Internet cannot help with?

What is one piece of information you think all young people should know about receiving health care during adolescence?

Story Cubes (Continued)

Say

Taking a more active role in your health care is a key part of becoming more independent and more responsible. Adolescents have the right to confidential health care, and most states ensure that young people can receive care for “sensitive matters” such as sexual health, drug and alcohol use, and eating disorders and other mental health issues without parent or caregiver permission.

Knowing what questions to ask and what might be asked of you can make your visits to the doctor or clinic more productive.

Some doctors or nurses do not address sexual health with young patients, so don't be shy about bringing up the topic if you have questions or asking to switch medical providers if you don't feel comfortable talking to your current doctor or nurse.

Even though most states ensure that teens can access health care on their own when they need it, parents and caregivers can still be really helpful. It is best to include parents and caregivers in conversations about your health and wellbeing as long as it is safe to do so.

Extension Activity

Using the same sentence structure as the Story Cube sentence, ask participants to write a story about the last time they visited a health care professional or a story about what they would like to do the next time they have an appointment with a health care professional. Participant volunteers can read their personal stories out loud.

Notes



**Called the office
and made my own
appointment**

**Called the office
and asked if I had
the right to confi-
dential care**

**Talked to an adult
about coming into
the exam room
with me**

**Fill in
the blank**

**Asked to switch
to a doctor or
nurse who works
specifically with
teenagers**

**Wrote down a list
of questions I
wanted to ask**

**Asked my doctor
or nurse to explain
what was going to
happen during
the exam**

**Showed the doctor
or nurse my list of
questions**

**Asked my doctor
or nurse a ques-
tion I was too em-
barrassed to ask
anyone else**

**Asked my doctor
or nurse if I could
make an appointment
without my parents or
caregivers knowing**

**Wrote down what
the doctor or
nurse said so that I
would not forget**

Fill in the blank

**If I had begun
menstruating and
when my breasts
started growing**

**If I ever drank
alcohol, smoked,
or did any drugs**

**If I were sexually
active**

**How I felt about
my friendships and
relationships with
my family**

**How I felt about
my weight and the
way my body looks**

Fill in the blank

**Confident
and mature.**

**Like I had been
nervous for no
reason**

**Like I should talk
to my parents or
caregivers more
about some of the
things I am going
through**

**Like I might want
to switch to some-
one I feel more
comfortable with**

Embarrassed

Fill in the blank

**Fascinating
Facts:**
**ADOLESCENT
HEALTH CARE**

Adolescents have the right to CONFIDENTIAL CARE! Confidential means that doctors and nurses cannot tell anyone else what you tell them. The only reason a doctor or nurse should share your business is if they are concerned that you are in danger, if someone is hurting you, or if you are going to hurt yourself or someone else.

Even though most states ensure that teens can access health care on their own when they need it, parents and caregivers can still be really helpful! They can help explain things later if you didn't understand what the doctor or nurse said, they can provide a family medical history, and they can give permission for medical testing or treatment. They can also help calm your nerves if it's time for a vaccine or if you are feeling nervous about a new medical issue. Even adults sometimes have another adult accompany them to a medical appointment for some of these same reasons.

If you are uncomfortable with your health care provider...SWITCH! Around this age, a lot of young people transition from a pediatrician (kids' doctor) to an adolescent health specialist.

How might my visits to the doctor or nurse change?

- They'll start to involve a lot more TALKING! Answer questions honestly (even when they seem really personal), and feel free to ask lots of questions.
- Parents or caregivers might be asked to leave the room so that the health care provider can talk to you privately.
- Don't be surprised if health care providers examine your genitals and/or breasts. This is just to make sure that everything is developing normally, but if it makes you uncomfortable, ask them to explain what they are doing before they begin.

What kinds of questions do doctors ask teens?

- When did your breasts begin to develop?
- Do you have any concerns about how your genitals are developing?
- Do you have any vaginal discharge? What does it look like? Have you noticed any odor?
- Have you begun menstruating? When was your last menstrual period?
- Do you drink alcohol? Do any drugs? How often?
- Do you smoke cigarettes or use any other form of tobacco? If yes, what do you use and how often?
- Are you dating? What are your relationships usually like? How long do they last?
- Are you sexually active?
- How are your friendships?
- What do you normally eat for breakfast, lunch, and dinner?

Fascinating Facts:

ADOLESCENT HEALTH CARE (continued)

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Do you exercise or play sports? How often?

How do you feel about your weight or what your body looks like?

Do you ever feel so sad that you want to hurt yourself?

How are things at school? How are your grades this year?

How is your relationship with your parents or caregivers?

How often do you ride in a car and not use a seatbelt?

How often do you ride in a car with someone who has been drinking alcohol or using drugs?

What kinds of questions do teens ask doctors?

Will you keep the information I share with you confidential?

When would you have to tell someone else something that I told you?

I don't understand what you mean. Can you draw me a picture or explain it a different way?

What does this medicine do? Are there any side effects I should know about?

I would like to start using birth control. What would you recommend for me?

Can you help me talk to my parents about this?

Can you recommend something that will help with acne/body odor/painful periods?

What does it mean when my doctor or nurse asks me if I am "sexually active"?

They usually want to know if there is a need for contraception (birth control), condoms, or STD testing and if you are in a safe, happy, and healthy relationship. They want to know if you are engaging in any kind of sexual behavior that could lead to pregnancy or passing STDs, if your partner is treating you well, if you are treating your partner well, if you are having enjoyable experiences, and if you and your partner are giving clear, confident, and enthusiastic consent to all sexual activity. Doctors and nurses can be most helpful when they know what is going on, so answer openly and honestly.

Notes
