

Know Your Teen's Brain

Parents assume teens are “young adults” capable of making adult decisions. They blame their teen's typical behavior on hormones. Doctors tell us, however, that a teen's brain is only 80% mature.

The brain becomes fully developed in a person's mid 20s. This accounts for a teen's occasional angry remarks, slamming of doors and poor choices.

Teens have excess gray matter and increased wiring in their brains. As a result, your teen:

- Learns quickly.
- Is easily influenced by his world – his peers.
- Has good motor control. Her hand-eye coordination is as good as it will ever be in her lifetime. This makes her great at computer and video games.

The skills your teen knows *and continues to practice* become sharper. The skills he does not use start to decrease. This process is called “pruning”. It helps to shape who he will become as an adult.

One of the last parts of a teen's brain to mature is the frontal lobe. This area of the brain helps teens:

- Be able to plan,
- Control impulses,
- Organize, and
- Focus and pay attention.

A developed frontal lobe helps them manage day-to-day activities with success.

The ability to learn both good and bad and the lack of frontal lobe maturity poses a risk to your teen. He is easily influenced by his peers. He lacks the ability to control impulses. If his friends engage in risky behaviors, he may also make the same poor choices. Learned practices such as binge drinking, smoking marijuana and bullying may affect your teen even into adulthood.

Since teens are easily influenced, positive, healthy relationships help keep them safe until their brain matures.

Parents who provide love, support and guidance make a difference.

- Encourage your teen when she feels down. Let her know life will get better.
- Work with your teen to solve problems. Be open to his ideas. Share your experience.
- Create and follow a daily plan for school, study and activities.
- Never excuse bad behavior. Support him as he suffers the consequences of a bad choice. Teach him to make a better choice next time.
- Know your teen's friends. Encourage her to find teens that will make healthy choices.

Brought to you by Parent Help Line at HSHS St. John's Children's Hospital to help keep kids safe, healthy and happy.



Call the Parent Help Line. Help is just a phone call away.

1-217-544-5808 or 1-888-727-5889
10 a.m. to 10 p.m., 7 days a week
www.parenthelpline.org

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