

# Physical Health

There are differences in physical development for both boys and girls. These physical changes can be influenced by several factors that may interfere with the typical course of development.

Note: the information below is biological sex specific. Gender identity and its impact on body changes are addressed during visits.

## Hormones

During the teen years, physical changes in the body happen in expected patterns. Hormones play a big role in these stages because they tell the body to start and stop:

- breast growth
- genital growth
- body hair growth
- body odor
- skin changes
- muscle/fat density changes
- menstrual cycle / periods

## Bones & Muscles

One of the most visible changes in teen development is height and weight. Bones and muscles get longer and stronger. The medical provider examines this rapid growth because it can put your teen at risk for a spine problem called scoliosis. Also, as bones get stronger, your teen's risk for muscle and tendon injury is higher. Full adult height is reached by the end of the teen years.

## Nutrition

Good nutrition is very important during the teen years because poor nutrition can delay development and can put your teen at risk for chronic illness later in life. The nutrition exam looks at the food your teen consumes to see if your child is at risk for diseases like anemia, poor brain function or immune challenges.

## Blood Tests

Generally, all teens need their cholesterol level checked at least once. Sometimes, other blood tests are ordered to screen for:

- blood sugar levels
- vitamin D levels
- thyroid function
- other hormones

These tests can tell the medical provider if your teen is at risk for diseases like obesity, diabetes and/or kidney damage.

## Possible areas for discussion:

- Hygiene
- Early or late onset of puberty
- Gender identity and body changes
- Menstrual cycle challenges

