

Adolescent Privacy Practices - On the occasion of the early adolescent (12 year) well visit.

Starting with the first encounter with your pediatrician, which in many cases occurred in the newborn nursery, the primary goal has been to collaborate with you, the parent, to raise healthy children to become healthy adults. As your teen progresses through this phase of adolescent growth and development, this goal shifts to one in which they assume a more active participation in their interaction with their pediatrician. Working together during this time, requires two important considerations: confidentiality between patient and physician and a shift in the responsibility for health decisions from parent/guardian to the adolescent. We are sharing this information with you at this visit, in anticipation of beginning at your son/daughter's next well visit.

Confidentiality

Our shared goal is to provide the best health care possible to your adolescent. This requires honesty between patient and physician. Adolescents are often more open to discussing important topics when assured of confidentiality. Vermont State law does recognize this concept. There are certain situations that allow a pediatrician to overrule these confidentiality protections and notify a parent/guardian or other agency without the permission of the adolescent. For example, if there is a concern your son/daughter has been hurt/abused, or if they disclose intent for serious harm to self or another individual. In the event we need to disclose this information, we will first have a discussion with your son/daughter to make them aware.

We recognize the valuable role the family plays in the life of their adolescent child. We support this role and actively **encourage**, not discourage open communication between teens and their parents/guardians especially when risky behaviors are identified. As a parent/guardian you have trusted your pediatrician's judgement for many years, and we ask for your continued trust as we manage sensitive information during the coming years, remembering we remain united in our goal to help your teen become a healthy well-adjusted young adult.

Shifting Responsibilities for Health Decisions

In a few short years your adolescent will be 18 years of age and be considered an adult. They will need to be prepared to operate more independently in many aspects of life, including their health care. This shifting responsibility is all part of the transition we are working toward. Your adolescent should be familiar with their own medications, should be aware when refills are needed and provide you or the office adequate notice to refill their prescription. Once a patient turns 18 years old, he/she will have sole access to their health information unless written permission grants a release to share information with a parent/guardian.

What's Next?

Beginning with your son/daughter's next visit, our staff will begin to bring them back alone for their scheduled appointment. The physicians will then bring you into the appointment after an initial time of independence with your adolescent. As always, we welcome your questions and concerns and are available to discuss these and this policy with you at any time.