

What is an Adolescent Health Specialist?

If your child is between the ages of 11 and 21 years, he or she may benefit from the care of an *Adolescent Health Specialist*.

Today's adolescents face tremendous social and academic pressures, as well as potentially life-threatening illnesses, habits, and behaviors. Adolescent health specialists have the training and expertise to help teens and young adults with their complex physical, behavioral, and emotional health care needs—from physical exams and immunizations to reproductive and mental health care.

What type of training do adolescent health specialists have?

Adolescent health specialists are medical doctors who have completed at least 4 years of medical school and 3 years of general pediatric, family practice, or internal medicine residency training.

Training for pediatricians interested in treating adolescents now also includes fellowships specifically in adolescent health.

What types of treatments do adolescent health specialists provide?

Adolescent health specialists provide adolescents and young adults with comprehensive care and treatment for a variety of problems and conditions, including

- Physical exams required for driver's permits, college entrance, and sports participation
- Sports medicine and orthopedic problems, such as scoliosis
- Growth and development issues
- Acute or chronic illness, from strep throat to asthma, diabetes, or cerebral palsy
- Headaches, chest pain, and other aches
- Gynecologic and reproductive health/sexuality issues
- School, learning, and attention problems
- Nutrition, obesity, and eating disorders
- Drug, alcohol, and tobacco use prevention and counseling
- Psychosocial problems including depression, stress, anxiety, self-esteem, and sleep problems
- Acne and other skin conditions

According to individual state law pertaining to adolescents and confidentiality, certain health care issues related to reproductive and mental health can be assessed and treated confidentially.

Where can I find an adolescent health specialist?

Adolescent health specialists practice in a variety of medical institutions, university medical centers, community hospitals, clinics, private medical offices, juvenile detention facilities, and school- and college-based health services throughout the country.

Adolescent health specialists—the best care for teens and young adults

Adolescents have unique and important health care needs. Parents and adolescents can be assured that an adolescent health specialist is a qualified advocate who can appropriately care for and counsel teens through the many physical and emotional changes and challenges that arise during adolescence. These physicians are uniquely trained to assist adolescents in the transition from pediatric to adult health care services. Adolescent health specialists know how to examine and treat adolescents in a way that puts them at ease. Their waiting rooms and exam rooms are relaxed and age-appropriate; nurses and other medical staff know how to communicate effectively with teens and young adults. Adolescent health specialists are also specially trained to mediate and help improve communication between youth and their families. Although your pediatrician can care for most adolescent problems, there may be conditions where your adolescent may benefit from seeing an adolescent specialist who has extra training in adolescent health.

The information contained in this publication should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. There may be variations in treatment that your pediatrician may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances.

From your doctor

