

# **Developmental Milestones**

**3-16 year olds**

By

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## **Developmental Milestones: Ages 3 Through 5**

Knowing what to expect as your child grows can reassure you that your child is on track with his peers or alert you to potential concerns. Below are some milestones to watch for during the preschool years.

Since birth, you've watched your child grow and develop. You've noted his height and weight, when he crawled, stood, and walked, even when he spoke his first words — and perhaps compared all of these milestones of his infant and toddler years to the "norms." The preschool and early school years are also full of changes. From three to five your child's motor skills, language, thinking, and social development change dramatically.

Knowing what to expect as your child grows can reassure you that your child is on track with his peers or alert you to potential concerns. Below are some milestones to watch for during the preschool years.

### **Milestones: 3-Year-Olds Motor Development: Gross Motor Skills**

- walks with an agile, almost adult style
- runs around obstacles
- catches large balls and throws overhead
- climbs ladders; uses slide independently
- rides a tricycle
- alternates feet when climbing stairs

### **Motor Development: Fine Motor Skills**

- assembles simple puzzles
- manipulates clay; finger paints
- copies simple shapes, such as a cross or circle
- stacks blocks up to nine high

### **Language and Thinking Development**

- understands most of what is said and 75 percent of speech is understandable
- speaks in complete sentences of three to five words
- matches pictures to objects
- learns by doing and through the senses
- understands concepts of "now," "soon," and "later"
- begins to recognize cause-and-effect relationships

### **Social and Emotional Development**

- follows simple directions; enjoys helping with household tasks
- begins to recognize own limits — asks for help
- likes to play alone, but near other children
- does not cooperate or share well
- able to make choices between two things
- begins to notice other people's moods and feelings

**Tips for Parenting 3-Year-Olds** No longer a toddler, your 3-year-old takes in knowledge about himself and the world around him.

- Transitions are difficult at this age. Provide warning of changes so your child has time to shift gears: "We're leaving in 10 minutes."
- Rituals are important. Household routines and schedules give your 3-year-old a sense of security.
- Point out colors and numbers in the course of everyday conversation: "You're wearing your blue shirt" or "We made six cupcakes."
- Encourage independent activity to build self-reliance.
- Provide lots of sensory experiences for learning and developing coordination — sand, mud, finger paints, puzzles.

### **Milestones: 4-Year-Olds Motor Development: Gross Motor Skills**

- running is more controlled; can start, stop, and turn
- turns somersaults; hops on one foot; gallops
- can easily catch, throw, and bounce a ball
- can brush teeth, comb hair, wash, and dress with little assistance

### **Motor Development: Fine Motor Skills**

- copies crosses and squares
- prints some letters
- uses table utensils skillfully
- cuts on a line

### **Language and Thinking Development**

- uses a 1,500-word vocabulary; speaks in relatively complex sentences ("Mommy opened the door and the dog ran out.")
- understands words that relate one idea to another — if, why, when
- continues to learn through experience and the senses
- understands, mostly, the difference between fantasy and reality
- understands number and space concepts — more, less, bigger, in, under, behind
- thinks literally; starting to develop logical thinking
- begins to grasp that pictures and symbols can represent real objects
- starts to recognize patterns among objects — round things, soft things, animals
- grasps the concepts of past, present, and future but does not understand the duration of time

### **Social and Emotional Development**

- takes turns, shares, and cooperates
- expresses anger verbally rather than physically
- can feel jealousy
- may sometimes lie to protect herself, but understands the concept of lying
- enjoys pretending and has a vivid imagination

**Tips for Parenting 4-Year-Olds** Silly, imaginative, and energetic, your child loves to try new words and new activities.

- 4-year-olds crave adult approval. Provide lots of positive encouragement.
- Display calendars and analog clocks to help your child visualize the concept of time.
- Play word games to develop his growing vocabulary; overlook his fascination with bad words.
- Offer opportunities for sorting, matching, counting, and comparing.
- Provide lots of play space and occasions to play with other kids.

## **Milestones: 5-Year-Olds Motor Development: Gross Motor Skills**

- runs in an adult manner
- walks on tiptoe, broad jumps
- walks on a balance beam
- skates and jumps rope

## **Motor Development: Fine Motor Skills**

- hand preference is established
- laces (but cannot tie) shoes
- grasps pencil like an adult
- colors within lines
- cuts and pastes simple shapes

## **Language and Thinking Development**

- speaks fluently; correctly uses plurals, pronouns, tenses
- very interested in words and language; seeks knowledge
- understands and names opposites
- uses complex language
- still confuses fantasy and reality at times
- thinking is still naïve; doesn't use adult logic

## **Social and Emotional Development**

- distinguishes right from wrong, honest from dishonest, but does not recognize intent
- plays make-believe and dresses up
- mimics adults and seeks praise
- seeks to play rather than be alone; friends are important
- plays with both boys and girls but prefers the same sex
- wants to conform; may criticize those who do not

**Tips for Parenting 5-Year-Olds** Your cooperative, easy-going 5-year-old loves to play and that's how he learns.

- Join in activities that develop coordination and balance — skipping and hopping, walking on the curb or crack in the sidewalk, or climbing trees.
- Encourage fine motor skills by letting your child cut pictures out of magazines, string beads, or play with take-apart, put-together toys.
- Take advantage of his interest in numbers by counting anything and everything; teach simple addition and subtraction by using objects, not numerals.
- Let your child know what to expect from an upcoming event or activity so he can prepare. Avoid springing things on him.
- Help him recognize his emotions by using words to describe them: "I see you're angry at me right now."

**A "Snapshot" of Two 5-Year-Olds** This story of Jimmy and Maria illustrates the range of skills, interests, and abilities considered typical development for this age.

Jimmy pressed his forehead against the window as he watched his neighbor Maria drive away in the car with her mother on their way to her first day of kindergarten. He sighed and waved. He hoped Maria would see him, yet he didn't want to go outside to make sure.

Jimmy felt sad and disappointed that he wasn't going, too. At the same time he was glad that he could stay home.

**Motor Activity** Jimmy had asked his mother why he wasn't going to school. He was going to be five soon, just like Maria. And he could do all kinds of things. He was good at running, jumping, and climbing. He could roller skate and ride a tricycle. Maria could do some of those things, too, but not like Jimmy.

Maria couldn't really climb a tree, but Jimmy was the best tree climber ever. He didn't tell his mom, but he had climbed the tall tree in Maria's back yard. She didn't even try to climb it. She just yelled at him to come down. She thought he was going to hurt himself.

"Girls! Maybe it's a good thing that Maria is going to school," Jimmy thought. "It's better to play with boys anyway. Boys do more fun things. Girls like to sit and color and write and play house and cut out paper dolls and all those yucky things." But Jimmy had to admit that Maria liked to play ball and chase and run, too.

If only Billy lived closer! But mom said he's too young to walk all the way over to Billy's by himself.

**Readiness Skills** "Young, heck! That's what Mom told me about school — I'm too young to go to kindergarten. I'm going to be five in two weeks! That's not too young," Jimmy had told his mother.

She replied that she wasn't talking about being just five years old. She said that he was a "young five."

"Whatever that is!" thought Jimmy.

Mom explained that there were things he still needed to learn before he went to school.

"What things?" asked Jimmy.

"Like sit and listen," said Mom.

"I can sit and listen when I want to. Why do you have to sit and listen to something you don't like anyway?" Jimmy wondered.

Mom had said it was OK to stay home and just go to preschool until kindergarten. She told him that not all five-year olds do everything at the same time. Maria can draw and write numbers and letters and cut with scissors, but Jimmy was just beginning to do those things.

He told her that he could run, jump, and stand on his head better than Maria could. Mom said that was great, but in school they want you to sit in a chair and write and cut and paste. That made him very, very sad, and he cried a little. Mom hugged him and told him that he was just fine and soon he'd be able to do all the things that Maria could do.

"Look at all the wonderful things you can do," she said. "You build great castles in the sand and amazing objects with Legos. You tell wonderful stories, and you listen very carefully when I read books to you. And you're a super joke teller." Mom always laughs and laughs at Jimmy's funny jokes.

She told him that next year would be a fun year, and he would grow and learn a lot. In preschool, she called it pre-kindergarten to make him feel better, he'd learn all those things that he'll need to know for kindergarten. She said she would help him with the alphabet and numbers and writing at home. She said he already knew his colors and shapes and that he uses grown-up words when he talks.

"Mom is always telling me all the things I can do. That makes me feel good. I know she really loves me!"

**And Finally...** Remember that these milestones represent averages, not rigid developmental deadlines. Children move through these changes at varying rates, some sooner, others later. You're the best judge of your child's development and what is "normal" for him, but if you have any concerns, discuss them with your child's pediatrician. Just when you think you've figured out your child, something changes. Today he demands constant attention; six months from now he may be pushing you away. You may find strategies that once worked no longer have any impact on him. Don't worry, this is normal!

Reviewed August 2008

## **Developmental Milestones: Age 5**

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- Walks on a balance beam
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### **Motor Development: Fine Motor Skills**

- Hand preference is established
- Laces (but cannot tie) shoes
- Grasps pencil like an adult
- Colors within lines
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### **Language and Thinking Development**

- Speaks fluently; correctly uses plurals, pronouns, tenses

- Very interested in words and language; seeks knowledge
- Understands and names opposites
- Uses complex language
- Still confuses fantasy and reality at times
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### **Social and Emotional Development**

- Distinguishes right from wrong, honest from dishonest, but does not recognize intent
- Plays make-believe and dresses up
- Mimics adults and seeks praise
- Seeks to play rather than be alone; friends are important
- Plays with both boys and girls but prefers the same sex
- Wants to conform; may criticize those who do not

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## **Developmental Milestones: Your 6-Year-Old Child**

Knowing what to expect as your child grows can reassure you that your child is on track with his peers or alert you to potential concerns. Below are some milestones to watch for in your six-year-old.

In the early school years, you won't see dramatic changes in motor skills because this is a period of refinement, when coordination improves and fine motor skills are sharpened. But you will notice remarkable changes in social and thinking skills. Your child is now building on the base of skills developed during early childhood and moving toward greater independence, both intellectually and emotionally.

Here are some of the milestones you can expect of a 6-year-old:

### **Motor Development**

- may still be somewhat uncoordinated and gawky
- able to learn to ride a bicycle
- can move in time with music or a beat

### **Language & Thinking Development**

- moving toward abstract thinking
- develops reasoning skills
- shifts from learning through observation and experience to learning via language and logic
- wants it all; has difficulty making choices

### **Social & Emotional Development**

- grows more independent, yet feels less secure
- craves affection from parents and teachers
- friendships are unstable; can be unkind to peers
- needs to win and may change rules to suit herself
- may be hurt by criticism, blame, or punishment
- can be rigid, demanding, and unable to adapt
- increasingly aware that others may have different feelings

**Tips for Parenting a 6-Year-Old** At 6, your child is curious, active, and becoming engrossed in school and new friendships.

- Provide consistent structure at home to help your child adapt to the disciplined world of school.
- Give lots of opportunity for physical activity to help develop skills.

- Make a point of attending your child's school and sports events. It's important for her to show off her accomplishments.
- Be patient with her selfishness; it will pass.
- Be generous with praise.

**"Snapshot" of a 6-Year-Old** *Jenny's story illustrates the range of skills, interests, and abilities considered typical development for this age.*

Marilyn laughed and thought of her daughter, Jenny, as she finished the last lines of a poem by A. A. Milne:

"But now I am Six, I'm as clever as clever.  
So I think I'll be six now for ever and ever."

**Imagination** The imagination of a 6-year-old is amazing. Marilyn thought about Jenny's clever and creative thinking to explain the unexplainable. When a frog appeared in our backyard pond, we wondered how he got there. Jenny had no problem explaining it this way:

The frog, desperate for water, asked Mr. Jack Rabbit, who is a really fast runner, "Please take me to a place with water."

Being a good friend, Mr. Jack Rabbit said, "Of course. Just jump on my back, and I'll take you to this nice pond."

So the frog jumped onto the rabbit's back, and the rabbit brought him to our pond.

"He really likes it here, and he'll be Jack Rabbit's friend forever," said Jenny.

Her father praised Jenny for her great story but said he didn't think it really happened that way. "You know animals can't talk," he said.

"Yes, they can! We may not be able to hear them, but they really can!" Jenny said. "Remember all the animals in the Just So Stories? They can talk. The Indians know they can talk."

Dad wanted Jenny to understand the difference between what's real and what's pretend without taking away the magic and mystery of childhood beliefs, so a long talk followed. Jenny knows that Santa Claus may not be able to come down the chimney, but she's positive he exists. And she very aggressively defends her ideas.

**Rules** Like all six-year-olds, Jenny is dedicated to fairness and makes sure everyone follows the rules. Since she learned to read in first grade this year, she reads all the road signs and informs drivers about whether they're following the rules. The other day she told her dad that if he didn't obey the law to go 25 miles an hour, he probably would not be able to live at home. "People who don't obey the law are bad, and bad people can't live with good people." explained Jenny. "Not that you're bad, Daddy. But people might think you're bad if you don't obey the law." Jenny wanted him to follow the rules, but she didn't want to hurt his feelings. She's very sensitive about other people's feelings. She was probably a little nervous and fearful that something terrible might happen to her dad if he didn't obey the law. In relaying what she knows about rules, she sometimes gets information confused. Marilyn smiled and a warm feeling

spread through her as she thought about her daughter. What a delight she is — always trying to understand and explain her world.

### **Friends**

Just then, Jenny burst into the house with exciting news. She threw her arms around her mother and told her that Sophia had asked her to spend the night

"Please, please, please, let me, Mom?" asked Jenny. "She is my bestest friend in the whole wide world! Please! Please!"

"That's exciting," answered Jenny's mom. "I think it will be all right, but let me talk to Sophia's mom and find out all the details. After I talk to her, we can decide what's going to happen."

Jenny skipped through the afternoon gleefully planning her first sleep over with her friend.

### **Fears**

Later, Jenny came to her mom and asked a very important question. Would there be monsters in Sophia's house?

About a year ago, Jenny was very concerned about the monster she was sure was under her bed. Even after many discussions about real and make-believe, she still had fears. She came to me with a plan to get rid of monsters, especially bed monsters. I participated in Jenny's "Monster, Be Gone!" ceremony and now she's able to sleep in her bed, certain the monster has left.

Marilyn assured Jenny that she would talk to Sophia's mom about monsters and make sure that there were none in her house. She gently tried to convince her daughter that monsters weren't real and there was nothing to worry about.

"But if they do," said Jenny, "we'll just perform the "Monster, Be Gone!" ceremony, and everything will be just fine."

"That's my Jenny!" beamed Marilyn.

## **Developmental Milestones: Your 7-Year-Old Child**

Knowing what to expect as your child grows can reassure you that your child is on track with his peers or alert you to potential concerns. Below are some milestones to watch for in your seven-year-old.

In the early school years, you won't see dramatic changes in your child's motor skills because this is a period of refinement, when coordination improves and fine motor skills are sharpened. But you will notice remarkable changes in his social and thinking skills. Your child is now building on the base of skills he developed during early childhood and moving toward greater independence, both intellectually and emotionally.

### **Here are some of the milestones you can expect of a 7-year-old: Motor Development**

- hand-eye coordination is well developed
- has good balance
- can execute simple gymnastic movements, such as somersaults

### **Language and Thinking Development**

- uses a vocabulary of several thousand words
- demonstrates a longer attention span
- uses serious, logical thinking; is thoughtful and reflective
- able to understand reasoning and make the right decisions
- can tell time; knows the days, months, and seasons
- can describe points of similarity between two objects
- begins to grasp that letters represent the sounds that form words
- able to solve more complex problems
- individual learning style becomes more clear-cut

### **Social and Emotional Development**

- desires to be perfect and is quite self-critical
- worries more; may have low self-confidence
- tends to complain; has strong emotional reactions
- understands the difference between right and wrong
- takes direction well; needs punishment only rarely
- avoids and withdraws from adults
- is a better loser and less likely to place blame
- waits for her turn in activities
- starts to feel guilt and shame

**Tips on Parenting a 7-Year-Old** Now more socially aware, your child thinks about the world around him.

- This is a time of fragile self-esteem, so offer frequent encouragement and positive feedback.
- Help ease the tendency for self-criticism by stressing what he's learned rather than how the final product looks.
- Be patient and understanding of volatile emotions and moods.
- Take advantage of his eagerness to learn by asking open-ended, thought-provoking questions, doing puzzles, and playing thinking games.
- Initiate discussions about right vs. wrong.
- Provide opportunities for independent decision-making.

**"Snapshot" of a 7-Year-Old** *This story of Nick illustrates the range of skills, interests, and abilities considered typical development for this age.*

"Hey, Mom," yelled Nick as he burst into the house after school.

"I'm out in the yard," answered Caroline, Nick's mother.

**Understanding the World through Questioning** Nick threw his backpack on the sofa and dashed outside, blurting out his exciting news. "Guess what! This year we get to have a time in class when we can ask any question we want. And Ms. Briggs said there are no stupid questions and she would answer all of ours or help us find the answers. So today I asked why dogs have a tail and I don't, and Ms. Briggs answered it. Can you believe it? She really meant what she said. She didn't think I was just trying to be funny. I think I'm really going to like second grade. It was lots of fun today."

Before school began, Nick's older brother told him second grade was boring because you just do the same thing you do in first grade; just a lot more of it. So Nick had not looking forward to going to school. He could already read some second grade books and do borrowing and carrying in math.

"Thank goodness for Ms. Briggs," thought Caroline.

"I'm going to write down all the questions I can think of," continued Nick enthusiastically.

"I'm sure Ms. Briggs will love that," laughed Caroline with a roll of her eyes.

Ms. Briggs didn't know what she had in store for her. Children Nick's age have an endless number of questions about every subject in the world. The questions are continuous, and Nick was a pro at asking questions.

Just last week after church Nick asked, "Who is God? What does he look like? Has anyone ever seen him? If we haven't seen him, how do we know he's real?"

Caroline sighed and thought about Ms. Briggs. Now she can be the Queen of Answers.

**Developing Self-Awareness** Nick continued with his excited dialogue, "And Mom, and Mom, we also get to have a Resolution Court. Any time there is a fight or an argument we have the Court. And guess what? I was the one who knew what "resolution" meant, so I got to be the first one picked."

"How wonderful," said Mom.

"We'll all get a turn on the Resolution Court, but I'm one of the first. What a cool day!" Nick said excitedly. "Today I didn't care if they called me 'brainy' or not."

Nick was becoming more aware of who he is and the differences between himself and others. In the past, he didn't like kids to call him "brainy" because it made him feel different. Nick once told his mom that it might have been better if he had been born with less brains and more talent to play baseball. Caroline was pleased to see her son happy about feeling rewarded for who he was.

**Accepting Differences of Opinion** Nick had Mom's attention and was certainly going to take advantage of his time with her.

"Mom, you know we're trying to decide where to go for a vacation. Well, I was reading some books about the best beaches to visit and one book said Florida beaches were best and another book said the best beaches were in South Carolina. How can they disagree? Isn't one beach better than the other based on facts? How can you make a decision when they tell you different things? I thought I would be able to find out what beach is best by reading a book. Don't authors have to be right? How can they both be right?" Nick said in a torrent.

"Nick, both authors can be right as to how they view the beaches," explained Caroline. "The authors like one beach better than the other depending on their judgment — just like you enjoy asparagus and Jack doesn't. It's a matter of personal preference."

"So I can believe that one beach is better than the other, and Jack can believe what he wants to believe?" questioned Nick.

"Exactly." Said Mom. "A difference of opinion makes the world go round."

"That's silly," quipped Nick. "Opinions can't make the world go round."

Caroline laughed. One of these days Nick would be able to see the world as shades of gray instead of black and white and not be so literal. In the meantime, she would just have to be a good listener and gently guide him to understand and accept differences of opinion.

## **Developmental Milestones: Your 8-Year-Old Child**

Knowing what to expect as your child grows can reassure you that your child is on track with his peers or alert you to potential concerns. Below are some milestones to watch for in your eight-year-old.

During grades 1 through 3, you won't see dramatic changes in your child's motor skills because this is a period of refinement, when coordination improves and fine motor skills are sharpened. But you will notice remarkable changes in social and thinking skills. Your child is now building on the base of skills developed during early childhood and moving toward greater independence, both intellectually and emotionally.

**Here are some of the milestones you can expect of your 8-year-old:**

### **Motor Development**

- finger control is quite refined
- stamina increases; can run and swim further

### **Language and Thinking Development**

- can converse at an almost adult level
- reading may be a major interest
- seeks to understand the reasons for things
- begins to feel competent in skills and have preferences for some activities and subjects
- thinking is organized and logical
- begins to recognize concept of reversibility ( $4+2=6$  and  $6-2=4$ )

### **Social and Emotional Development**

- has strong need for love and understanding, especially from mother
- can be helpful, cheerful, and pleasant as well as rude, bossy, and selfish
- may be quite sensitive and overly dramatic
- emotions change quickly
- impatient; finds waiting for special events torturous
- makes friends easily; develops close friends of same sex
- favors group play, clubs, and team sports; wants to feel part of a group
- more influenced by peer pressure
- can be obsessed with, and motivated by money

## **Tips for Parenting an 8-Year-Old** At 8, your child has a strong need to "belong."

Talk to your child about peer pressure.

Listen and discuss his concerns about friends and school performance.

Take advantage of his interest in money to teach about costs and the importance of saving toward a goal.

Develop moral why some things are right or wrong.

Recognize your child's need for privacy and secrets. Give him a locking drawer or box.

**And Finally... Remember that although the milestones mentioned here are typical, children pass through these stages at their own pace.** Some will be earlier, some a little later. Discuss any concerns you may have about your child's development with your pediatrician or teacher.

Updated October 2004

## **Child Development: 9- to 16-Year-Olds**

By Nancy Firchow, M.L.S.

Kids in early adolescence experience tremendous intellectual, physical, social, and emotional changes. What can parents expect to see? Middle adolescence is a time of blossoming development — the insecure, inwardly focused 13-year-old becomes a cheerful, charming 16-year-old looking toward the future. During this time your child's thinking skills take a decidedly adult turn, his body matures, and friends and social networks outside the family become increasingly important. Now is when you will really begin to get a glimpse of the adult your child will become.

**Physical Development** Boys and girls still exhibit markedly different levels of physical maturity as they enter middle adolescence. Girls' rapid growth is generally tapering off, while many boys have yet to see the beginning of their much anticipated growth spurt. By the end of this period most girls will be near their adult height; boys may continue to grow until age 18 or 19.

### **Girls:**

- growth in height continues, but at a slower pace than earlier; adult height is reached by age 16 or 17
- breast development continues
- pubic hair thickens, darkens, and takes on adult triangular pattern
- underarm hair thickens
- hips widen; fat deposits in buttocks, legs, and stomach increase
- menstrual periods become regular; ovulation is established; pregnancy becomes possible

### **Boys:**

- rapid growth in height and weight
- muscles fill out and strength increases dramatically
- voice deepens
- pubic and underarm hair appears and thickens
- body hair increases
- penis, scrotum, and testes enlarge
- ejaculation and nocturnal emissions occur

## **Both Girls and Boys:**

- always hungry; appetite is great
- need for sleep increases; may sleep quite late on weekends
- oily skin and acne may be problematic
- sweating increases
- rapid growth may cause clumsiness and lack of coordination
- sexual desires and fantasies increase

**Intellectual Development** Between 13 and 16 your child's ways of thinking about himself, others, and the world shift to a much more adult level. He enters middle adolescence with a focus on things he can experience here and now, and moves to being able to imagine the range of possibilities life holds. Expect the following changes as a progression of development rather than as age-based milestones:

- arguing skills improve (and are demonstrated often and with great passion)
- reasoning skills improve:
  - begins with the ability to apply concepts to specific examples
  - learns to use deductive reasoning and make educated guesses
  - learns to reason through problems even in the absence of concrete events or examples
- becomes able to construct hypothetical solutions to a problem and evaluate which is best focus on the future develops:
  - begins with a present focus, mixed with some fantasy
  - learns to recognize that current actions can have an effect on the future
  - starts to set personal goals (and may reject goals set by others)
- decision-making skills improve:
  - begins to independently differentiate right from wrong and develops a conscience
  - learns to distinguish fact from opinion
  - learns to evaluate the credibility of various sources of information
  - becomes able to anticipate the consequences of different options
  - may challenge the assumptions and solutions presented by adults

**Social & Emotional Development** During this period your child will continue to be an emotional pendulum: happy and at ease one year, troubled by self doubts the next. These swings will smooth out as your teen approaches the end of high school and gains more confidence in his own independence.

## **13-Year-Olds**

- uncertain, unhappy, and sensitive
- withdrawn; spends a lot of time alone; needs privacy
- convinced that everyone else is watching and judging
- very concerned with body image
- self-esteem at a low ebb
- not sociable with adults

- friendships tend to be group-focused; more squabbling than a year ago

### **14-Year-Olds**

- generally happy and easy-going
- recognizes own strengths and weaknesses
- finds many faults with, and is embarrassed by, both parents
- likes to be busy and involved in many extracurricular activities
- social circle is large and varied; includes friends of both sexes
- very anxious to be liked
- interest in the opposite sex is strong

### **15-Year-Olds**

- may be quarrelsome and reluctant to communicate
- strong desire for independence; wants to be free of family
- relationship with siblings may be better than with parents
- friends are very important; may have one or two "best friends"
- dating and romantic relationships are commonplace

### **16-Year-Olds**

- relationship with family is easy and giving
- feels comfortable in own skin; secure sense of self
- starts to view parents as people, rather than rule-makers
- friendships are very important
- most have many friends of both sexes with shared interests
- romantic relationships can be quite intense

**And Finally...** Remember that growth and development are influenced by many factors — including genetic, social, and cultural — and that each child is an individual who will develop at his own pace. The milestones presented here are averages; your child may progress more quickly or a little more slowly. You can help your child through this period of great change by showing support and listening to his worries and concerns. And as always, if any aspect of your child's development seems very atypical, talk to his pediatrician and encourage your teen to ask questions as well.

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