



# Better Safe!



WELCOA'S ONLINE BULLETIN FOR YOUR FAMILY'S SAFETY

# Risky Business

## Dealing With Your Teen's Behavior

Adolescence can be a bewildering time—for both teens and their parents. Yet it can also be thrilling to watch kids grow and change. Learning about teenage development and behaviors can help parents nurture their children's strengths and shepherd them over the rough spots.

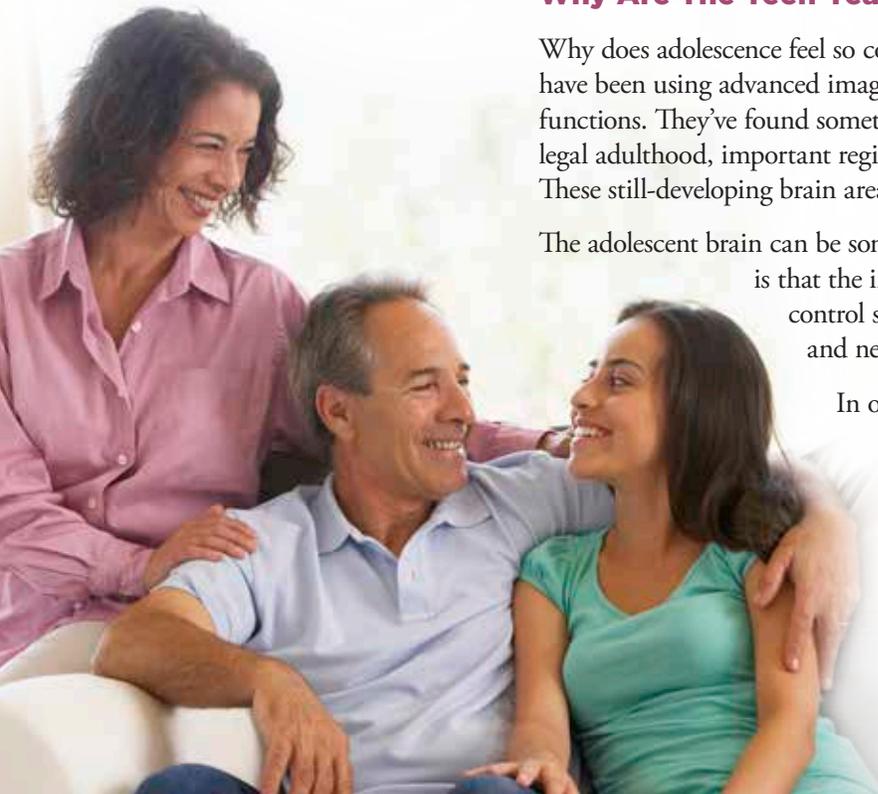
### Why Are The Teen Years So Tough?

Why does adolescence feel so complicated and intense? It all begins with the brain. Scientists have been using advanced imaging tools to take a good look at how the adolescent brain functions. They've found something they didn't expect. Although the 18th birthday means legal adulthood, important regions of the brain are still under construction until about age 25. These still-developing brain areas govern judgment, decision-making and impulse control.

The adolescent brain can be somewhat like a rider on a racehorse with no reins. "The problem is that the incentive/reward system matures earlier than the cognitive control system," explains Dr. Lisa Freund, a developmental psychologist and neuroscientist at the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

In other words, the brain's "that's so cool, I want it now" part develops well before the "stop and think twice" part. That's why adolescents are especially susceptible to the immediate rewards of addiction, sexual experience, risky driving and more. They have trouble controlling impulses and considering the possible long-term consequences of their actions. What worries parents so much is that kids don't seem to realize how vulnerable they are to the risks they face.

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## Risky Business

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### Common Risky Behaviors Among Teens

#### Sexual Activity

Among U.S. high school students surveyed in 2009, almost half reported that they had engaged in sexual intercourse at least once, and over 400,000 15- to 19-year-old girls gave birth. Of the 19 million new sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) recorded each year, nearly half are among young people who are 15 to 24 years old. This age group is also the fastest-growing group of people living with HIV in the U.S.

#### Alcohol Use

You also need to talk to your teen about other behaviors such as drinking alcohol. Alcohol depresses cognitive control and increases the risk for substance abuse and sexual activity. Alcohol and drug use might also lead to situations where teens can be sexually abused.

Teens may not want limits, but they still need them. Throughout late adolescence and early adulthood, they still need guidance. Setting limits is important because it takes years for kids to master the art of making decisions. Adolescents are similar to preschoolers in that activation in various parts of the brain isn't yet mature and interconnected.

### Communication Is Key

Parents can help by encouraging their teen's strengths. Talking, listening and channeling an adolescent's ongoing interests can have a powerful positive effect.

Experts suggest that parents use technologies—such as texting or mobile phone calls—to stay in contact with their teens. Even if you can't be there physically, they should know that you're available and that you care about them.

If you have concerns about your teen, and he or she seems unwilling to talk about it, consider making a call to your child's doctor—ideally, an adolescent medicine specialist. Make an appointment so your teen can talk privately with the care provider.

Adolescence is a stage that does have risks, and some kids may be more vulnerable than others. Yet there's a lot that parents can do to keep their kids safe, make them feel loved, and help them move through the changes. Adolescence is not a disease, but a journey towards independence. It's possible for both parents and their kids to enjoy this time—and even treasure it.

### PARENTING A TEEN

- Respect your teen's opinions. Nonjudgmental communication shows your love.
- Be honest and direct with your teen when talking about sensitive subjects such as drugs, drinking, smoking and sex.
- Help your teen make healthy choices and plan ahead for difficult situations.
- Meet and get to know your teen's friends.
- Compliment your teen and celebrate your child's efforts and accomplishments.
- Respect your teen's privacy.
- If your teen uses interactive social media—such as games and instant messaging—encourage caution and limit the time spent online.
- Have meals together. Teens who eat with the family are more likely to have better grades and less likely to smoke, drink, use drugs, think about suicide or engage in sexual activity.



## Weighing In On

# Dietary Fats

We need a certain amount of fat in our diets to stay healthy. Fats provide needed energy in the form of calories. Fats help our bodies absorb important vitamins—called fat-soluble vitamins—including vitamins A, D and E. Fats also make foods more flavorful and help us feel full. Fats are especially important for infants and toddlers, because dietary fat contributes to proper growth and development.

Problems arise, though, if we eat too much fat. Dietary fats have more than twice as many calories per gram as either proteins or carbohydrates like sugar and starch. Excess calories, of course, can pack on the pounds and raise your risk for diabetes, cancer and other conditions.

### Focus on the Right Fats

Foods can contain a mixture of different fats. Unsaturated fats are considered “good” fats. They’re sometimes listed as “monounsaturated” and “polyunsaturated” fat on Nutrition Facts labels. These can promote health if eaten in the right amounts. They are generally liquid at room temperature, and are known as oils. You’ll find healthful unsaturated fats in fish, nuts and most vegetable oils, including canola, corn, olive and safflower oils.

The so-called “bad” fats are saturated fats and trans fats. They tend to be solid at room temperature. Solid fats include butter, meat fats, stick margarine, shortening, and coconut and palm oils. They’re often found in chocolates, baked goods, and deep-fried and processed foods.

Some Fats  
Are **Healthier**  
Than Others



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## Weighing In On **Dietary Fats**

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Experts note that when you eat too many solid fats, you can put your body and health at risk. These fats tend to raise total blood cholesterol, and high cholesterol levels are a risk factor for cardiovascular disease.

Experts say that the total fat intake for adults ages 19 and older should be 20 to 35% of calories eaten each day. For children ages 4 to 18, it should be 25 to 35%.

### **Limiting "Bad" Fats**

- Trim extra fat and skin on meats and poultry before cooking.
- Instead of frying, try baking, steaming, grilling or broiling.
- Use olive or canola oil instead of butter or margarine.
- Choose margarines with liquid vegetable oil as the first ingredient, or butter substitutes that list water as the first ingredient.
- Look for recipes that use applesauce instead of butter or oil.
- Instead of making a double-crust pie, try a single crust.
- Serve fruits for dessert.
- Use fat-free or low-fat dairy products when possible.
- Avoid cream dips, gravy and whipped cream.
- Broth-based sauces, vinegar, salsa, lemon and herbs add flavor, not fat.



# Is It Reflux Or GERD?

WHEN  
HEARTBURN  
SPELLS  
TROUBLE!

## Symptoms of GERD

- Hoarseness. If acid reflux gets past the upper esophageal sphincter, it can enter the throat (pharynx) and even the voice box (larynx), causing hoarseness or sore throat.
- Laryngitis
- Nausea
- Sore throat
- Chronic dry cough, especially at night. GERD is a common cause of unexplained coughing. It is not clear how cough is caused or aggravated by GERD.
- Asthma. Refluxed acid can worsen asthma by irritating the airways. And asthma and the medications used to treat it can make GERD worse.
- Feeling as if there is a lump in your throat
- Sudden increase of saliva
- Bad breath
- Earaches
- Chest pain/discomfort.

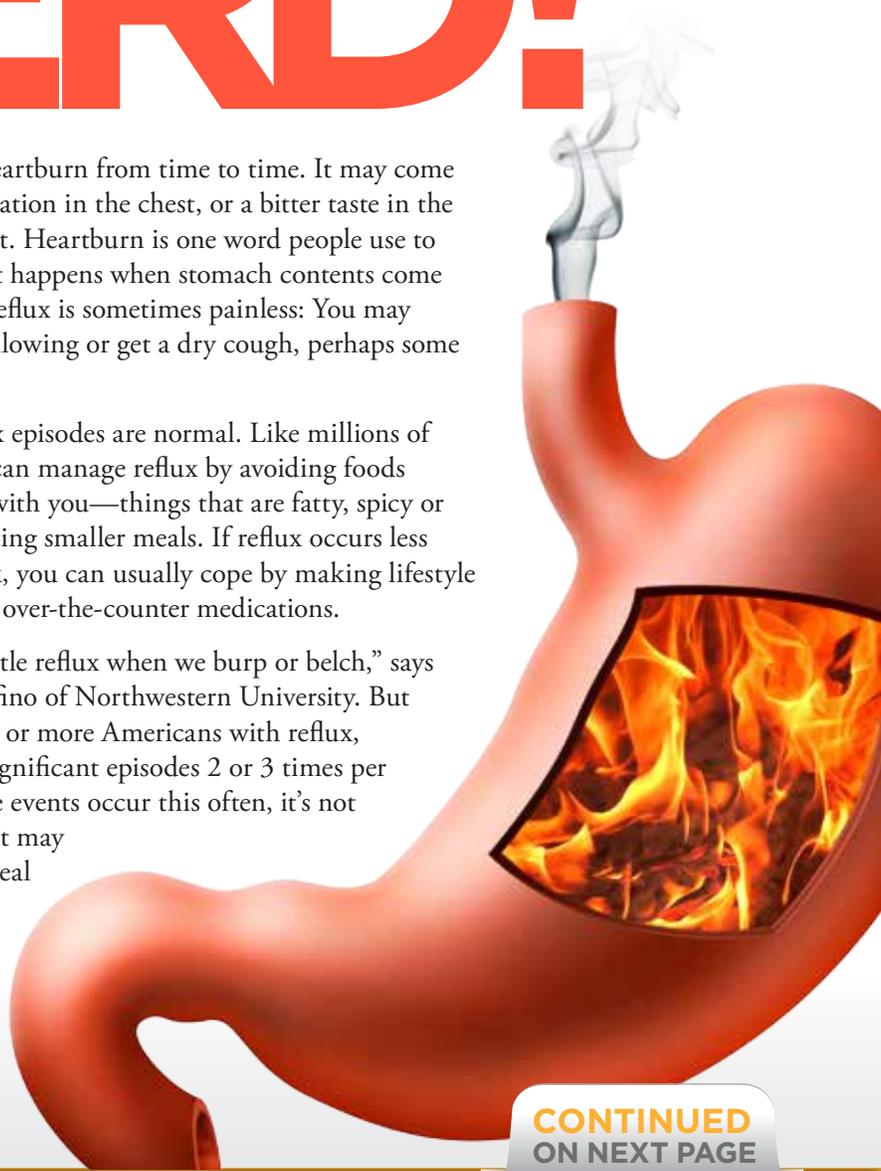
## In infants and children, GERD can produce these symptoms:

- Recurrent vomiting
- Coughing
- Breathing problems
- A failure to thrive

Most of us get heartburn from time to time. It may come as a burning sensation in the chest, or a bitter taste in the back of the throat. Heartburn is one word people use to describe reflux. It happens when stomach contents come back upwards. Reflux is sometimes painless: You may have trouble swallowing or get a dry cough, perhaps some wheezing.

Occasional reflux episodes are normal. Like millions of Americans, you can manage reflux by avoiding foods that don't agree with you—things that are fatty, spicy or acidic—or by eating smaller meals. If reflux occurs less than once a week, you can usually cope by making lifestyle changes or using over-the-counter medications.

“We all have a little reflux when we burp or belch,” says Dr. John Pandolfino of Northwestern University. But of the 20 million or more Americans with reflux, about 5% have significant episodes 2 or 3 times per day. When severe events occur this often, it's not ordinary reflux. It may be gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD). You may need prescription medications to control it.



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## How To Steer Clear of Reflux

- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Eat smaller meals.
- Avoid triggering foods, including alcohol.
- Don't lie down for three hours after a meal.
- Raise the head of your bed 6 to 8 inches by putting wood blocks under the bedposts.
- For an infant, try burping frequently during feeding. Keep the infant upright for 30 minutes after feeding.
- If you have reflux twice or more per week, see your health care provider.

## Is It Reflux Or GERD?

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### Understanding GERD

GERD should be taken seriously. Stomach (gastric) contents contain acid needed to digest food. In reflux, these contents wash upward into the esophagus, a slender tube connecting the mouth and the stomach. Because the lining of the esophagus isn't meant to touch gastric acid, the acid can irritate the lining of the esophagus and lead to bleeding and scarring. In adults, GERD can raise the risk of cancer of the esophagus. And if you have asthma, GERD can make it worse.

As for babies, reflux is common in healthy infants. Most babies outgrow reflux by 13 months, but if they don't, they too may have GERD.

GERD can harm a child's ability to feed and grow. It can also increase the risk for inhaling stomach contents into the lungs. This can be life-threatening.

### When Heartburn Spells Trouble

#### Treating GERD

People of any age can have GERD. Available medications, whether over-the-counter or prescription, can make the acid in the esophagus less intense. But medications don't prevent GERD. Surgery can be an option if symptoms are severe and medicine and lifestyle changes don't seem to help.

Dr. Michael Raymond Ruggieri, Sr., of Temple University is researching the root causes of GERD. The problem isn't that the stomach makes too much acid. In GERD, the special set of muscles between the esophagus and the stomach is weakened.

"The stomach muscle fibers are not doing their job, and we're trying to understand why they're not," says Dr. Ruggieri. His team is among the first to look at how nerves receive and send messages to these muscle fibers. Their goal is to develop drugs that prevent GERD altogether.

If you have reflux twice or more per week, talk to your health care provider. It's best to start treatment early to prevent GERD from leading to more serious health problems.



# Salt, Blood Pressure & Your Health

## Cut Back On Sodium

- Look at Nutrition Facts labels and try to choose foods that have less than 5% of the Daily Value of sodium per serving.
- Use fresh poultry, fish and lean meat, rather than canned, smoked or processed.
- Choose fresh or frozen vegetables that have no added salt.
- Rinse canned foods to remove some of the sodium

Salt is essential to our body's fluids. The chemical name for dietary salt, or table salt, is sodium chloride. Since 90% of the sodium we ingest is from salt, it's difficult to separate the effects of salt and sodium in many studies. However, it's the sodium part most doctors focus on.

"The best known effect of sodium on health is the relationship between sodium and blood pressure," explains Dr. Catherine Loria of the National Institutes of Health's National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute (NHLBI). Dozens of studies, in both animals and people, have shown that a higher salt intake raises blood pressure. Reducing salt intake, on the other hand, lowers blood pressure.

## What You Need To Know About Blood Pressure

Blood pressure is the force of blood pushing against the walls of arteries as the heart pumps out blood. When this pressure rises—a condition called high blood pressure, or hypertension—it can damage the body in many ways over time. High blood pressure has been linked to heart disease, stroke, kidney failure and other health problems.

There are 2 blood pressure numbers, and they're usually written with one above or before the other. Systolic, the first, is the pressure when the heart beats, pumping blood through the arteries. Diastolic is the pressure when the heart is at rest between beats. The numbers 120/80 mmHg are the ones you should aim to keep your blood pressure below.

Some research also suggests that excessive salt intake might increase the risk of stomach cancer. Scientists continue to investigate this possible connection.

Researchers do know that not everyone is equally sensitive to salt. "From our experiments, we know there's lots of variation in the blood pressure response," Loria says. Certain groups of people see greater

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## Salt, Blood Pressure & Your Health

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reductions in blood pressure when they lower their salt intake: African-Americans, older people and people with blood pressure above normal.

### Daily Recommendations For Sodium

Experts recommend that people take in less than 2,400 milligrams of sodium a day—that's what's in about 6 grams of salt, or about a teaspoon. People with high blood pressure should shoot for 1,500 milligrams or less—about 3.7 grams of salt. But right now, the average man in the United States takes in over 10 grams of salt per day and the average woman over 7.

Dr. Kirsten Bibbins-Domingo at the University of California, San Francisco, recently led an NIH-funded study that used computer modeling to explore the effects of a modest reduction in salt intake in the United States. The researchers found that reducing salt intake by 3 grams per day could cut the number of new cases of heart disease each year by as many as 120,000, stroke by 66,000 and heart attack by nearly 100,000. It could also prevent up to 92,000 deaths each year. All segments of the population would benefit, with African-Americans having the greatest improvements overall. Women would particularly benefit from reductions in stroke, older adults from a decline in heart disease and younger adults from fewer deaths.

### The Real Sources Of Salt Consumption

The salt we sprinkle on our food actually accounts for less than 10% of our salt consumption. Most of the salt we eat salt comes in processed foods from stores, restaurants and dining halls. You may already know that fast food, cold cuts and canned foods tend to have a lot of salt.

“Many people don't realize that a lot of our salt is from breads and cereals,” Bibbins-Domingo says. Studies have found that over 20% of the salt in the average American's diet comes from grain products, such as breads, cereals, crackers and chips.

“In terms of advice, I think the best guidance we have is for people to pay attention to nutrition facts on the labels,” Loria says. “The percent daily value is a better guide than the language that's used on food labels like ‘low-salt.’ These labels can be confusing because they have very defined technical meanings.” Try to select foods, she advises, with less than 5% of the daily value of salt per serving.

Even small reductions can have an effect on your blood pressure. If you can't find a low-salt alternative to a particular food, it still helps to pick something that's lower than what you're already consuming.

Why not start now? Make small changes at first, and then keep working to gradually lower your family's salt intake.

Amount Per Serving		Calories from Fat 110	
Calories 250		% Daily Value*	
<b>Total Fat</b> 12g			18%
Saturated Fat 3g			15%
Trans Fat 3g			
<b>Cholesterol</b> 30mg			10%
<b>Sodium</b> 470mg			20%
<b>Potassium</b> 700mg			20%
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 31g			10%
Dietary Fiber 0g			0%
Sugars 5g			
<b>Protein</b> 5g			
Vitamin A			4%
Vitamin C			2%
Calcium			20%
Iron			4%
*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your Daily Values may be higher or lower depending on your calories needs:			
	Calories:	2,000	2,500
Total Fat	Less than	65g	80g
Sat Fat	Less than	20g	25g
Cholesterol	Less than	300mg	300mg
Sodium	Less than	2,400mg	2,400mg
Total Carbohydrate		300g	375g
Dietary Fiber		25g	30g