

## Research Article

# HEALTHY HABITS FOR TEEN GIRLS – A STUDY

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### Abstract

The empowers adolescent girls with practical strategies to thrive amid school stress, social media pressures, and body image challenges. This guide covers nutrition-packed meals, fun physical activities, restful sleep routines, and mindfulness tools to combat anxiety and boost self-esteem. Through relatable stories, easy recipes, and bite-sized challenges, it transforms overwhelming wellness goals into sustainable daily wins. Tailored for ages 10-19, it addresses key issues like malnutrition and anaemia while fostering resilience and joy. Girls learn to nurture body, mind, and spirit for lifelong confidence and health.

**Keywords:** Adolescent Girls, Health Habits, Malnutrition, Anaemia, Self-esteem.

### INTRODUCTION

In today's fast-paced world, teen girls face unique pressures from school stress and social media to body image worries and future dreams. Building Healthy Habits. A Teen Girl's Guide to Well-Being empowers you with simple, fun strategies to nurture your body, mind, and spirit. Discover easy ways to eat smarter, move more, sleep better, and build confidence that lasts. Start small, stay consistent. Parents often approach the teenage years with the fear of the unknown, especially with their first child. Up until now their child was fairly predictable, liked to accompany them places and, generally speaking, home was a calm and peaceful place. But parents often feel challenged when their children enter their teenage years as teenagers seem to prefer the company of their friends, have a greater need for privacy and independence, and can become challenging and critical of parents. For the young person this is a time of intense change, occurring at many levels physical, psychological and social. These changes can occur at intervals or all at the one time. It is this high level of change that brings new challenges to both parents and teenagers. When parents understand the intense change, their teenage child is experiencing, it can benefit them in their parenting role and help them to maintain a positive relationship with their son or daughter. Parents have a huge influence in guiding teenagers to make positive health choices. It is amazing and rewarding to watch teenager grow up and to help them learn to be independent. This guide contains information on physical and mental health, including the importance of relaxation and down time, a balanced diet and adequate sleep. Good communication, problem solving skills and self esteem in teenagers all promote wellbeing by enabling teenager to express their needs and make healthy personal choices.

### OBJECTIVES

1. Explain to the group on the significance of nutrition and health care during adolescence.
2. Explain what can be done to deal with malnutrition, anaemia and other important considerations during adolescents.
3. Explain the group about adolescent friendly health clinics and how they can benefit.

### METHODOLOGY

This study is based on the analysis of the secondary data and published in the varies journals, annual reports and websites. Descriptive research includes surveys and fact finding

enquires of different kinds. The major purpose of descriptive research is description of the situation as it exists at present. The researcher used secondary data for developing understanding of the pivotal role in the current issue of Management of Malnutrition in Indian Children.

#### **What is meant by a teenager's well-being?**

Well-being' covers issues regarding physical and mental good health, which includes relaxation and down time, a balanced diet and adequate sleep, time spent with friends, social activities and a supportive family and neighbourhood. Positive self-esteem, good communication and problem-solving skills promote well-being by enabling your child to express their needs and make healthy personal choices.

Teenage child should have age appropriate responsibilities and understand and respect the limits set for them by you and by society. Their well-being is promoted by them having support when dealing with issues such as bereavement, bullying, divorce and separation. Well-being can be nurtured in social organisations such as school, sport and cultural centres as well as within religious organisations. Poverty, abusive experiences, discrimination based on race, ethnic or religious background or sexual orientation can diminish a young person's well-being and may prevent them from reaching their potential. Whether young people belong to one or two parent families.

#### **Overall well-being factors are**

- Living in a family with good problem-solving skills.
- Closeness within the family, doing things together and teenagers helping out.
- Positive communication within the family.
- Being helped to learn to take responsibility and make positive choices, meaning greater independence and freedom to make their own choices, especially regarding friends and free time.
- Support to explore, enjoy and develop their varied interests and talents.

#### **Father's involvement with their children**

In an ideal world, children would be reared by both parents in their own home. Of course, sometimes, for many reasons, this is not possible. Whether parenting together or apart, research has shown that there are many benefits when a father remains involved with his children. In the case of boys, fathers often take on the role as the person who shares humour and can "have a laugh" with them and both sexes can enjoy activities with their fathers such as playing computer games, football and watching TV together. The involvement of the father with the child at the age of 7 and 11 has been shown to predict the number of national examinations passes at age 16.

#### **PROPER HEALTH AND NUTRITION DURING ADOLESCENCE**

Initiate discussion by asking the participants their understanding on Adolescent age and the issues they may have faced in their children or other adolescent children of the family. List the concerns and probe with the group about what they think should be done. Explain to them the following points emphasising the importance of this stage of life.

- Adolescents are people aged between 10 to 19 yrs.
- It is a transitional stage of physical growth and mental development from childhood to adulthood.
- About 23% of the total population of India are adolescents.
- Adolescence is the fastest growing stage marked by the onset of puberty.
- It is characterized by physical growth, reproductive maturation, cognitive, functional and metabolic transformation. Physical and lifestyle changes affect nutritional need and eating habits respectively.
- Adolescent girls are at greater physiological stress because of menstruation.
- Maintaining nutritional health is of utmost importance for optimum growth and for preventing future health related problems.

#### **NEED FOR HEALTH AND NUTRITION CARE DURING ADOLESCENCE**

There are 250-270 million adolescents in 2026 the age group 10-19 years in India. This age group comprises of individuals in a transient phase of life requiring nutrition, education, counselling

and guidance to ensure their development into healthy adults. They are susceptible to several preventable and treatable health and behavioural issues, like early & unintended pregnancy, unsafe sex leading to STI/HIV/AIDS, nutritional disorders like malnutrition, overweight, alcoholism, drug abuse and mental health disorders. Government of India has recognized the importance of influencing health-seeking behaviour of adolescents. The health situation of this age group is a key determinant of India's overall health, mortality, morbidity and population growth scenario. Therefore, investments in adolescent reproductive and sexual health will yield dividends in terms of delaying age at marriage, reducing incidence of teenage pregnancy, meeting unmet contraception need, reducing the maternal mortality, reducing STI incidence and reducing HIV prevalence. It will also help India realize its demographic dividends, as healthy adolescents are an important resource for the economy. Adolescence offers a second chance to avert negative impacts of malnutrition that may have occurred during childhood.

**Understood that the adolescent stage is important to:**

- Meet physical and cognitive growth demands.
- Nurture good lifestyle habits.
- Prevent adult onset of illnesses such as heart disease, diabetes, etc.

**Inappropriate diet and health care during adolescence may lead to**

- Retarded physical growth, delayed sexual maturation.
- Lack of concentration, poor school performance slow learning.
- Deficiencies and disorders such as anemia, undernutrition, obesity, eating disorders, diabetes, etc.

**SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVED NUTRITION**

Discuss the food preferences of adolescents what they generally like to eat and the diet patterns they follow. Probe their likes and dislikes, as well as what mothers do to encourage healthy eating, including recipes they try. Guide participants on do's and don'ts to improve adolescents' nutritional status, and urge them to share this information with adolescents to foster good eating habits.

Do's	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Balanced diet is essential for optimal growth and development.</li> <li>• Add high protein foods pulses, legumes, dairy, meat and eggs in the diet.</li> <li>• Consume plenty of green leafy vegetable and seasonal fruits.</li> <li>• Drink at least 6 - 8 glasses of water daily and plenty of other fluids.</li> <li>• Eat healthy snacks such as sprouts, murmura, chana, makhana, etc.</li> <li>• Ensure sunlight exposure for adequate vitamin D to help calcium absorption.</li> <li>• Exercise regularly</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do not skip meals.</li> <li>• Avoid excessive sugar and salt intake, fried and fast foods.</li> <li>• Do not consume alcohol or tobacco.</li> <li>• Do not watch television while having meals. Pay attention to what you are eating.</li> </ul>

**Dietary Suggestions for such adolescents include**

- Eat frequent meals but in small portions. Do not eat heavy meals at a time.
- Include high fibre foods like whole grains and pulses, fruits, leafy vegetables in the diet.
- Choose low fat dairy and lean meats like chicken, fish and egg whites.
- Use healthy, non-fried snacks like sprouts, chana, poha, etc
- Exercise regularly and monitor weight regularly.

**Anaemia in Adolescents**

Based on WHO guideline, adolescents are said to be anaemic when their haemoglobin level is less than 12mg/dl. But this might be affected due to the increased iron requirement, decreased iron

intake, rapid physical growth, menstrual loss, and high iron demand for haemoglobin (Hgb) formation. In India, approximately 40 percent of girls and 18 per cent of boys are anaemic. Anaemia among adolescents adversely affects growth, resistance to infections, cognitive development and work productivity. Adolescents need more nutrients than adults because they gain at least 40 percent of their adult weight and 15 percent of their adult height during this period. Inadequate intake can lead to delayed sexual development and slower linear growth.

Anaemia is decrease in the total amount of red blood cells or haemoglobin in the blood, or a lowered ability of the blood to carry oxygen. Anaemia leads to poor cognition and physical development, poor concentration and school performance; decreased immunity and repeated infections; fatigue, shortness of breath, irregular menstruation and sometimes even loss of consciousness.

### **Teenage Development**

Adolescence is defined by the World Health Organization as a period between the ages of 10 and 19, though this can vary from one young person to another. To understand broadly the different stages, they can be described as early, mid and late adolescence. Changes occur for young people due to physical development and hormonal changes in their bodies. These changes happen in the following areas physical, psychological, emotional and behavioural. These areas will be described in detail in the different stages as follows:

- Early adolescence (10–13)
- Mid-adolescence (14–16)
- Late adolescence (17–19).

	<b>Physical changes</b>	<b>Psychological Changes</b>
10–13 year-olds may	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have sudden growth spurts (boys and girls).</li> <li>• Have an increase in appetite (boys and girls).</li> <li>• Develop body hair: underarms, pubic region and chest hair in boys.</li> <li>• Show development of breasts in girls with slight weight gain and broadening of hips.</li> <li>• Have onset of periods for girls.</li> <li>• Show development of the sexual organs in boys.</li> <li>• Have spontaneous erections and wet dreams in boys.</li> <li>• Show development of pimples/acne (boys and girls).</li> <li>• See voice changes for boys.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Begin to develop more abstract thinking and ask philosophical questions such as “Why does God let wars happen?”</li> <li>• Challenge parent’s behaviour “Why do you tell me not to lie when you do?”</li> <li>• Begin to question parents’ authority.</li> <li>• Look outside the family for role models or to their own personal heroes such as footballers, movie and pop stars.</li> <li>• Still need parents’ support in helping them to choose between right and wrong.</li> <li>• Begin to reflect on their identity.</li> <li>• Begin to identify their maleness or femaleness and like to spend time with their own gender.</li> <li>• Display interests and talents such as in music, sport, debating etc.</li> </ul>
14–16 year olds may	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have faster growth rates (boys and girls).</li> <li>• Show greater development of breasts for girls and sexual organs in boys.</li> <li>• Have a need for more sleep and food (boys and girls).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop greater reasoning, imagination and wider understanding in general and consider “What if...?”</li> <li>• Have the ability for abstract thinking and be able to generate solutions.</li> <li>• Have intelligent debates on many issues and may look for a cause or</li> </ul>

		<p>commitment to things like politics, religion, the environment and animal rights.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Become very idealistic and have a greater interest in philosophy and examine moral dilemmas from different points of view.</li> <li>• Believe the world revolves around them and have grandiose ideas about their lives.</li> <li>• Believe that they are safe from accidents, illness and death.</li> </ul>
17-19-year-olds may	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Show less dramatic changes in growth as teenagers of this age appear physically mature, though growth may continue for a few more years.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appear mature though worry about adulthood.</li> </ul>

**Key recommendations for prevention of or to deal with Anaemia includes**

**Dietary recommendations:** Consume iron rich and Vitamin C rich diet. Vitamin C allows better absorption of iron in the body. Thus, the diet should include green leafy vegetables and citrus fruits along with other items.

**Iron Folic Acid:** Take one blue coloured iron tablet every week. Never take an iron tablet on an empty stomach. Do not take it with milk, tea or coffee. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare’s Weekly Iron and Folic Acid Supplementation (WIFS) Programme is to meet the challenge of high prevalence and incidence of anaemia amongst adolescent girls and boys. This targets both in school and out of school adolescents.

**Deworming:** To prevent stomach worms, take one tablet of Albendazole twice a year.

- ❖ If you feel tired, can't concentrate on work, forget important things or start feeling short of breath, go to the nearest health centre and get tested for anaemia.
- ❖ Both iron and Albendazole tablets are provided free of cost from the nearest health centre and Anganwadi and also in government schools.

**Important considerations during adolescence**

The National Health Mission under its “Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram” mentions six objectives that should be covered. Briefly discuss about each of them and their relevance in overall growth and personality development of adolescents.

1. **Sexual and Reproductive Health:** Improved knowledge on sexual health for both boys and girls, consequences of early marriage and teenage pregnancies.
2. **Mental Health:** Stress, anxiety, depression, eating disorders, body shaming, etc. Ensure family support, encourage completing education and provide emotional support.
3. **Injuries and Violence:** Promoting favourable environment to prevent gender-based violence, domestic violence, bullying, spirit of unhealthy competition, road injuries, etc.
4. **Substance Abuse:** adolescents are in exploratory stage and are more likely to fall into substance abuse. They should have complete awareness on the adverse effects and consequences.
5. **Address NCDs:** adolescence could be onset of NCDs (Non-Communicable Diseases) due to improper nutrition, stress, other related behaviours. Knowledge on dietary practices and related behaviours to prevent the same should be ensured.
6. **Menstruation related issues:** Understanding on the natural biological process; pay attention to nutritious diet, proper hygiene and disposal methods.

These issues should be addressed in discussion with ASHA/ANMs. Government has established Adolescent Friendly Health Clinics, for support to adolescents. Contact ASHA/ANM for more information. Contact and be part of Youth Groups/Clubs for more information.

## **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

A Teen Girl's Guide to Well-Being equips girls aged 10-19 with actionable tools to navigate modern challenges like academic stress, social media influence, and nutritional gaps such as anaemia and malnutrition. Key sections explore balanced diets rich in iron and vitamins, enjoyable exercises, sleep optimization, and mental health practices including mindfulness and self-esteem building. Relatable stories, mother-approved recipes, and do's/don'ts highlight adolescent food preferences favouring tasty snacks over veggies while addressing likes (fruits, nuts) and dislikes (bitter greens). Objectives focus on fostering physical wellness, mental resilience, and self-empowerment through sustainable habits.

Small, consistent changes yield big results: healthier bodies, sharper minds, and unshakeable confidence. Mothers play a pivotal role by creatively adapting recipes and sharing nutritional wisdom. Girls, start today swap soda for fruit-infused water, walk with friends, and affirm your worth daily. Share these insights with peers to spark a wellness ripple effect. By prioritizing nutrition, activity, and positivity, you build not just habits, but a vibrant future. Thrive, shine, and own your well-being!

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