

Adolescent Development of Girls

Most girls...

	Pre-Adolescence (9-11) Where they are coming from...	Early Adolescence (12-14)	Middle Adolescence (15-18) Where they are headed to...
Physical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical growth varies widely during this time! Experience a growth spurt that starts approximately two years before the onset of menarche During each of those two years, (usually ages 11/12 to-13/14) they can gain up to 13 pounds and grow four to five inches At this age, girls tend to be taller than boys Continue to have high levels of physical energy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experience a great deal of physical change including a growth spurt Expedient physical changes may cause awkward physical coordination Continue to improve their motor development and coordination skills, may go through stages of awkward physical coordination Continue to need opportunities for physical activity Begin or continue to experience physical changes of puberty (menarche: 12.5) Rates of physical and cognitive change do not necessarily correspond Pubic hair, arm hair and leg hair reach adult patterns at 13-14 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most young women have a slowing of physical development in this age range, although some continue to experience physical changes of puberty. Most girls have completed their physical development during this age range. May be awkward or skilled, depending on pace of physical development and previous skill level Common to have markedly different athletic and physical skill levels Breasts fully develop between 12-18. Growth spurt of puberty slows and ends around 16
Cognitive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Able to take responsibility for materials and possessions, organizationally They are usually able to take responsibility for their personal hygiene Sustain prolonged attention and interest; make plans and start projects independently See similarities between two things that share observable features or abstract attributes Distinguish the possible from the unlikely Apply logical thought to practical situations Begin to understand the relationship between cause and effect Still function at the level of concrete operation Understand the concept of time Use language to exchange ideas; spend considerable time in discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May continue to think in categorical terms; tend to be authoritarian and see things as "one way or the other." Gradually increasing ability to engage in formal, systematic thought Can consider possibilities and frame hypotheses; is aware that situations and people can change Has ability to think abstractly, may need help to develop appropriate strategies for abstract thought Tend to focus primarily on the present with only a vague sense of the future Can cognitively plan for their future Learning to use abstract words, think independently/critically/deductively and apply logic when solving problems Able to consider alternative solutions when working on problems Learning to perceive the risks that accompany certain behaviors Growth of insight 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasingly able to consider the hypothetical, future, and the remote Increase capacity for logical thought and planning Consider long-range purposes Formulate and test hypothesis to consider multiple options in problem solving Have a clearer sense of risk and consequences Improved ability to verbalize ideas Better Able to appreciate alternatives

Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use language to exchange ideas; spend considerable time in discussion • Begin to seek independence • As they spend more time outside of the home, they become increasingly influenced by peers in their choices of activities and styles of relating • Renegotiate their peer group • Earlier friendships may be disrupted due to differing rates of maturation or other factors • Small cliques form at this stage, in those groups, they share knowledge, beliefs, misconceptions about their changing bodies, fears and other intimate feelings. • Physically affectionate with one another, but may also use relational aggression to control group membership • Continue to be, or now become, interested in sexuality, (depending on their physical development) • May already be facing decisions about sexual activity and drugs. • Girls may use computers for the purpose of social networking or online-characters/avatars, boys tend to play games that involve the use of hand-eye coordination and problem-solving • Girls continue to segregate themselves from boys • Girls who display an interest in socialized male activities are usually well liked by boys until puberty 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Believe their appearance and actions are always watched and judged by others • Learn to develop and maintain close, mutually supportive peer relationships • Conform to peer group norms and behaviors, especially those related to dress, music, hairstyle, recreation, and interests • Behaviors and perception of consequences influenced by peers • Peer groups may try to dress alike, act alike, or create secret codes or rituals • Continually redefining gender roles, based on messages they receive from society and their peers. • May be egocentric; focused on self • Some begin seek psychological separation from parents/guardians and family, strive toward self-reliance • Seek the company of adults other than parents who can serve as role models and provide support and guidance • May start to face important decisions like the use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs. • Believe that other people's attention is constantly centered on their appearance or actions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can continue to be egocentric, though diminishes in this age range • Actively seek independence from parental authority • Become disillusioned with their parents; identify shortcomings • Use hypocritical behavior toward disagreement or the unknown • May demonstrate independence by openly rejecting parents or societal norms • May experiment with behaviors of drinking, drug use, driving, have sexual relationships • High influence of close peer group/intimate friends • Need and want for intimate community and relationships • May be able to create intimate relationships without feeling worried or inhibited • Peer groups become a safe haven where new ideas are tested
Emotional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early-developing girls may feel particularly self-conscious and concerned about body image • Seek more privacy and often become more modest • Girls of this age experience increased pressure to conform to stereotyped gender roles. They may avoid academic achievement, for example, preferring to base their popularity on appearance, personality, or possessions. • Body image/physical appearance is important to girls' self-esteem. Girls tend to feel less attractive at this age than do boys. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate increased ability to understand others' feelings • Self-conscious, sensitive and worried about body changes, make comparisons to peers • Are especially vulnerable to bouts of low self-esteem, moodiness and intense emotionalism • Some adolescents are at risk of depression and suicide ideation, pay attention to anti-social behavior 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wrestle with emotional attachment feelings toward parents, may flip flop between feeling close to parents and alienating them. • Need for intimacy and belonging, confusion of who or where fulfills that • Feeling of invincibility, "it will never happen to me" • Many adolescents at increased risk of depression and suicide attempts because of dependence on and norms within peer groups

Sexual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin to use sexual language and have romantic and sexual fantasies • Become more aware of sexual feelings and may masturbate to orgasm • May develop romantic crushes on close girlfriends, on boys their age, or on older boys, women or men • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face important decisions in such areas as dating, sexual behavior • Further define their own sexual identity, including gender role and sexual orientation • Have more awareness of sexual feelings and attractions; possibly engage in some form of sexual behavior with others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to establish sexual identity • Will seek to feel comfortable with sexual feelings • Interested in body changes of self and others and sexual topics
Intellectual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have developed a social conscience around such issues as hunger, poverty, the environment and different types of discrimination; are interested in contributing to the community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is formulating their own identity, sense of purpose, and value system • Deal more effectively with ambiguity • Make short-term, yet intense commitments to people, ideals, and projects • May still believe that consequences of risk taking behavior "won't happen to me." • Aware of moral philosophies, rights and privileges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will often consider different points of view to define their own position • Continue to develop ideals, goals and values • Continue to develop and refine moral rights and privileges • Question old values without losing identity • Usually can identify a more mature sense of purpose • May not yet have good decision making skills around safety and consequences • Power struggles occur when being right is at issue • Tend to hesitate toward appropriate risks in academic and career pursuits

References:

- **"Infants, Children, and Adolescents"** by Laura E. Berk, PhD
- **Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh**
- **Girls Inc. Program Planning Guide**
- **University of Maryland Medical Center**