



# PARENTING POSTS

A newsletter for parents of sixth grade students

Parents want to help their children be confident and creative, and reach physical, social, emotional and intellectual potential. This newsletter will help you better understand your sixth grader.

## Growing Up Quickly

You may be enjoying your role as the parent of a preteen. Many say that ages 9 to 12 are the happiest years for parents. The busy caregiving times of earlier childhood are over, and the teen years are yet to come. While you may be feeling quite comfortable in your parenting role, your preteen is going through some big life changes. Some people have identified ages 10 to 12 as the most difficult time in a person's life. Your child must deal with feeling like a child and a teen at the same time!

One way parents can help their preteen through this period is by taking time to talk about physical and emotional growth and development, and help the child understand and adjust to these changes. Preteens generally receive very limited factual information about the physical changes in their bodies. Much of their information comes from conversations with their peers, magazines and the media, and that information is inaccurate and incomplete. **Sixth graders are very concerned about all the changes they are experiencing, and you are their best guide, teacher and support for these concerns.**

## Physical Growth

The transition is gradual enough that parents easily can overlook the difficulties a child may be experiencing during rapid physical growth. Even so, changes are so great that most children feel some sort of discomfort and distress at this stage of their lives. Girls usually have their slowest year of growth in their ninth year, with a growth spurt often starting at about age 10 and peaking at about 12 years of age. Girls



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Most children in the 7 to 12 age group need **10 to 11** hours of sleep each night. They may need extra sleep as they move into a rapid growth spurt.

### Stress Less Activity



Stress is part of everyone's life. Even young children! Try this activity with your child to help reduce stress and enjoy time together.

Destress with a lawn game. Make it a nightly event and switch up teams to keep it lively.

are apt to be taller and heavier than boys at this stage of development.

The slowest growth rate for boys is usually from age 10 to 11. Boys commonly begin their major growth spurt at about age 12. Up to this time, they may feel they never are going to grow.

**The greatest anxiety for the preteen seems to come when the child makes peer comparisons. Assure your child that varying growth rates are common.**

**Many excellent resources are available to help parents explain human physical development. These will make your child feel better when he or she realizes this happens to everyone.**

### Wellness

A well-balanced diet, 10 to 11 hours of sleep each night and an hour a day of exercise are necessary for normal physical development and the general wellness of your child. Preteens burn lots of energy, and a good supply of nutrients is important to meet the body's growth needs. These nutrients are best supplied by a variety of healthful foods. Developing good eating patterns that will carry into the teen years is especially important for children at this age.

Make an effort to see that nutritious snack foods are available in your home. If your kitchen is stocked with highly sweetened beverages, cookies, chips and other empty calories or minimally nutritious foods, do a pantry makeover. Generally, if a food item is not readily available, the child is not as likely to consume it. Your child is most likely to choose a nutritious snack if that snack is ready to eat.

By sixth grade, your child will be able to choose from and prepare fresh fruits and vegetables, simple sandwiches, and cheese and wheat crackers.

**Children need regular sleep.** Sleepovers, staying up to watch movies, and playing computer and video games are harmful to a child's sleep hygiene. Going to bed and getting up at about the same time each day is important for people to maintain a regular rhythm.



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**Adequate exercise is important for the preteen.** Children have different interests and physical abilities that influence their choice of exercise. Children who watch television or movies, play video games or spend time on the computer may not get enough physical exercise. Monitor your child's activity for a week and determine if they need your help to find a physically active video game, a sport or just more physical chores to meet their exercise goals.

Busy parents may feel many pressures from family and work responsibilities but should take time regularly to visit with their children about physical growth and development. **Preteens need the kind of support, love and concern that their parents are in the best position to provide.**

### Parenting Apart?

If you do not see your growing child on a daily basis but have parental rights, think of ways to help your child feel loved and appreciated even at difficult stages in their life. For example, if your child is showing an interest in art, start a simple picture and send it to them to see how they finish it. **Schedule regular times to connect with your children and let them know how important they are to you even when you can't be together.**



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