

TO THE PARENTS OF ADOLESCENT CHILDREN

Dear Parent,

When children become teenagers, they naturally need greater privacy regarding their health care. During the teen years, adolescents gradually learn to manage their care more independently. Eventually, this will lead to their transition to adult health care. Parents and health providers can work together to support teens during this process.

We believe it is important for adolescents to know that they can speak with their providers openly and honestly. This foundation of trust allows providers and parents to help them as they learn to be responsible for their own health.

Beginning at age 12, at least part of a teen's medical visit may be in private. The parents may be asked to step out of the exam room. Discussions of certain sensitive issues, such as sexual health and substance use, will remain confidential and will not be shared with the patient unless the adolescent requests.

However, please understand that we recognize our responsibility to advise you of any life-threatening situation or behavior that involves your child. In this case, we will inform the responsible parent or guardian, and we will tell the child that we have done so.

Regarding an adolescent's medical record, we seek to respect both the patient's legal right to privacy and parents' concerns for their child's well-being. Our policy follows generally accepted guidelines. Starting at 12 years, we treat certain sensitive portions of the medical record as confidential, as required by law. We cannot release these portions of the record to anyone without the adolescent's written consent. (However please realize that insurers sometimes send an adolescent's service and billing statements to a parent.)

Thank you for your partnership in health.