

There's a Good Reason We Call Them **AdoleSCENTS**



Supporting Good Hygiene in Those Reluctant Teens

If you follow the scent back to the source, you will most likely find one of five major stinkers as the culprit.

<i>Teens have...</i>		<i>Parents should...</i>
B	Better Things to Do.	Form habits by creating a hygiene schedule.
E	Excellent Procrastination Skills.	Set limits and provide consequences.
L	Lacking Knowledge.	Educate their teen about the dangers of poor hygiene to both their healthy and their social lives.
T	Transitional Difficulties	Be a good role model. Show them how to be a healthy adult.
S	Serious Problems with Mental Health Conditions.	Seek professional help immediately.

***When talking to your teen about hygiene issues,
remember these:***

DOS	DON'TS
<p>Be Direct. State Observations, like: “You have body odor. That tells me that you need to take a shower.”</p>	<p>Don't be subtle. They won't get the hints; for example: Don't leave deodorant for them in the bathroom.</p>
<p>Educate your teen about the importance of hygiene by focusing on simple facts.</p>	<p>Avoid lecturing, joking, teasing, or ridiculing as these can easily backfire, embarrassing the teen or making them more defensive.</p>
<p>Make good hygiene a responsibility. If your teen is resistant to basic teen hygiene, explain that taking care of himself/herself is a responsibility, and start treating it like his/her other household duties. Just as he is supposed to take out the garbage and keep his room clean, he is expected to have good hygiene. If not, there should be clear and firm repercussions, like revoked privileges.</p>	<p>Don't come down too hard. Don't start by hassling your kids about hygiene. Try to avoid confrontations. Once it becomes a struggle, your kids might be more likely to dig in their heels.</p>
<p>Give your teen flexibility: Let your teen choose the deodorant and when they want to take the daily shower.</p>	<p>Don't nag your teen: It can lead to a defensive teen.</p>

Good Teen Hygiene

When it comes to teen hygiene, what do you need to discuss with your kids? Here's a rundown.

Showering. "Most elementary school kids don't shower every day, and they don't need to," says Tanya Remer Altmann, MD, a pediatrician and author of *Mommy Calls* and *The Wonder Years*. But she says that once puberty hits, daily showering becomes essential. Recommend that they use a mild soap and concentrate on the face, hands, feet, underarms, groin and bottom. Washing under the fingernails is key, too.

Washing hair. Discuss the pros and cons of daily hair washing. Some teens may prefer to skip days to prevent their hair from drying out. Others may want to wash their hair daily -- especially if they have oily hair, which can both look greasy and aggravate acne.

Using deodorant or antiperspirant. Your kid has always had plenty of working sweat glands. But when puberty hits, the glands become more active and the chemical composition of the sweat changes, causing it to smell stronger. When you or your kid begin to notice it, using deodorant or an antiperspirant should become part of their daily teen hygiene.

Keep in mind that many self-conscious teens have a skewed perception of how much they're sweating. You may want to reassure them. "I see a lot of teens who are convinced that they're sweating a lot more than all their friends, even though they're perfectly normal," says Altmann.

Changing clothes. Before puberty, your kid might have gotten away with wearing the same shirt -- or even the same underwear and same socks -- day after day without anyone noticing. After puberty, that won't fly. Get your teen to understand that along with showering, wearing clean clothes each day is an important part of teen hygiene. Point out that cotton clothes may absorb sweat better than other materials.

Preventing acne. Altmann says that at around age 10, it makes sense for your teen to start washing his or her face twice a day. "Plenty of kids don't have any acne problems at that age, but getting in the habit early is smart," Altmann says. Make sure your teen understands not to wash too vigorously, even if her skin is oily. Trying to scrub off the oil will just leave the skin cracked and irritated.

Shaving and hair removal. When you notice hair on your son's upper lip or on your daughter's legs, you can offer a brief course on razor use.

Whether or not he or she wants to shave yet, at least you've provided the information. Girls may also be interested in hair removal products. You can go over the options. Your daughter may also need some reassurance; stray facial hairs that loom large when she's an inch away from the mirror may not be visible to anyone else.

Maintaining good oral health. Teens can get pretty lax about their oral hygiene. But brushing and flossing are crucial, especially if they're drinking coffee and sugary, acidic sodas and sports drinks. It's not only about tooth decay. Bad oral hygiene leads to bad breath -- and that's something that no teen wants, Altmann tells WebMD.

Understanding the body. If you're talking about good teen hygiene, that also means talking about puberty. Girls need to know about breast development and menstruation. Boys need to know about erections and wet dreams. Don't tiptoe around these subjects. If they don't get the info from you, they'll get some distorted version of it from their peers. You may find that giving your kids a good book on the subject -- or pointing them to reputable health web sites -- may help the conversation.