



East Portland  
**PEDIATRIC CLINIC, PC**



# Take Care

**HEALTHY TIPS**  
for **SPRING 2025**

Welcome to our Spring issue! As the weather begins to warm up, we're focusing on supporting kids and teens with chronic health conditions and helping them thrive. From nutritious recipes to a quiz on the human body, there's something for everyone to enjoy! Let's make this season a time for growth, *deep breaths* and getting outside when nature allows. As always, take care!



## How to Support Strong Identity Development in Teens With Chronic Health Conditions

By: Ken Ginsburg, MD, MSEd

Adolescence is when we humans develop our sense of identity. We begin to answer three questions at the foundation of how we view ourselves: "Who am I"; "Am I normal?"; and "How do I fit in?" Navigating a chronic disease can interfere with healthy identity development if the disease becomes core to a young person's identity or makes them believe that they can't fit in like other "normal" people. However, having a chronic health condition offers an opportunity for a young person to build a strong and confident self-identity.

### *Help Your Child Develop a Strong Identity*

You play a critical role in helping your child form a healthy identity. First, you can tip the scales, as best you can, to help your child's emerging identity benefit from navigating a chronic disease while limiting its negative impact. Second, you can help shape your child's identity by ensuring they have multiple positive inputs into their identity development. Even though managing the chronic condition may feel front and center in their lives, this can establish that their illness does not define them.

### *Three Tips to Support Healthy Identity Development in Your Child*

- 1 Support your child to build a confident self-identity by having them manage aspects of their chronic disease they can handle. Preparation** is the very best protection. Your child will ultimately learn to manage their condition independently. Doing so a step at a time while under your watchful eye is a great way of getting there. Keep them safe, but also let them learn and grow from their mistakes. Partner with them in decision-making

The Children's Health Foundation is a non-profit organization that partners with your Pediatrician to develop quality health care programs in our community. We work together to foster the highest quality care for children, to raise awareness on health issues, and to achieve better children's health outcomes. Please ask your provider for more information.

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so they can continue to build their skills and take on increasing responsibility as they prove themselves ready. In time, they will see themselves managing more than they initially thought they could. This builds confidence and pride.

**2 Encourage your child to build a strong self-identity by taking pride in their resilience.** We all wish our children had easy journeys through life. But when life **presents challenges**, such as living with a chronic illness, we can build strength in all aspects of our lives by developing the skills to manage adversity. Do not minimize the challenges your child must address. If you sugarcoat their reality or suggest “you’ll be stronger for it” they will not as readily trust your genuine feedback. Instead, underscore the specific strengths they are demonstrating. For example, notice how they manage the stressors and discomfort associated with their health challenges. Or comment on how they maintain their sense of humor even as they are going through so much. You’ll likely also see their compassion and empathy for others growing as they better understand others might also be going through something. Your goal is for them not just to see their condition as a burden (which it is!) but also as a way they can demonstrate their strength, build their confidence, and master **resilience-building skills**. The greatest resilience skill is relying on human connection. Through your loving and guiding presence, they will learn that relying on others for support is the best way to build our own power.

**3 Celebrate and build multiple positive sources of identity development.** Their health condition is a part of their identity, and we hope it will contribute to a strong and confident self-identity. However, it must not be the only input forming the core of their identity. Preventing it from taking a leading role in identity

development may require an intentional effort. After all, illness management might be taking up a lot of bandwidth in both of your lives and interfering with your child’s focus in other areas. **This makes it that much more important to notice and amplify other things about your child.** Are they a scholar, athlete, or artist? Kind? Compassionate? Generous? Tenacious? Motivated? How do they contribute to your family? You also can focus on other positive inputs that form a human identity. What is the community they come from? Their faith? Their culture? Their heritage? How might they contribute to the world and leave a legacy for future generations?

You can’t change the fact that your child is living with a chronic health condition. But, you can help them maintain a healthy identity despite it and perhaps even because of it.

Nobody wants their child to have to manage a chronic health condition or to suffer from its effects. You can’t change the fact that your child is living with a chronic health condition. But, you can help them maintain a healthy identity despite it and perhaps even because of it.

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## How to Build a Self-Care Toolbox for Kids and Teens

Self-care can be virtually anything that calms and relaxes us. Support your teen’s independence by encouraging them to seek out ways of unwinding that work well for them.



Deep breathing



Guided imagery



Meditation



Yoga



Dance



Drawing, painting, sculpture and other visual arts



Cuddling and caring for pets



Knitting, crocheting, beading and other craftwork



Massage



Hikes and nature walks



Music (whether listening or playing)



Journaling



Volunteering, tutoring or any activity that helps others

Adapted from “Self-Care for Teens: 4 Ways Families Can Support Coping Skills” by Dr. Rebekah Fenton MD, FAAP; Source: American Academy of Pediatrics Committee on Adolescence (Copyright © 2023)

# 3 Reasons Why Teens With Chronic Conditions Need Alone Time With Their Doctors

Victoria Miller, PhD



When our children are little, we don't often leave them alone. But as they move into the teen years, there are times when they need to be alone – like the doctor's office – even if that may feel hard. It can be especially difficult if your teen faces a chronic illness. Teens with chronic conditions have frequent doctor visits. Your teen's doctor plays a significant role in managing your teen's chronic condition. Doctors also help prepare your teen for greater responsibility for managing their health and transitioning to the adult healthcare system. When your teen communicates with their doctor and participates in visits, they learn how to advocate for themselves and make decisions about their health.

## *Benefits of Alone Time With the Doctor*

As your child gets older, your child's doctor may ask you to leave the room so they can meet with your child alone. Many parents feel surprised or hesitant about this request. It's normal for parents of teens with a chronic condition to feel worried as their teen takes on greater responsibility for their own health care. However, there are several benefits to your teen having alone time with their doctor.

1

**It allows teens to speak up more.** When your child was young, they often relied on you to communicate and make decisions with doctors. Sometimes, this pattern persists, even when your teen can better speak for themselves. When your teen has alone time with the doctor, it is up to them to share information and answer questions. They can develop their own style and role different from when you are in the room with them. This is important when learning how to interact with healthcare providers independently. When teens are more involved in communication and decision-making related to their condition, they have **more confidence** in themselves and take better care of their health.

2

**It lets teens be more open with their doctor.** **Teens and doctors** say that one-on-one time enables teens to be more forthcoming. This is especially true if the doctor asks about potentially sensitive topics, such as substance use, sexual health, and mental health. Getting accurate information about these topics is important for doctors to provide the best health care to your teen. Teens may also be more open with their doctor regarding challenges or concerns about their condition or treatment plan. Being open with doctors is a skill that provides the foundation for effective self-management and better health.

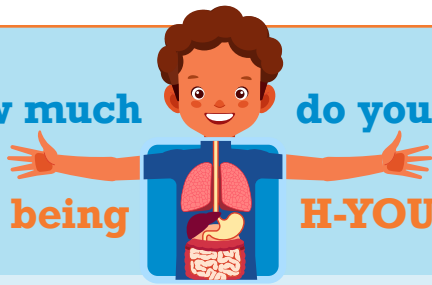
3

**It strengthens teens' relationships with their doctor.** **Parents and doctors** say that one-on-one time sends the message that the doctor values the teen's opinion and helps build trust in the doctor-patient relationship. When teens trust their doctor, they can communicate openly and participate in decision-making about their health. Building this relationship takes time, especially as your teen develops their identity and determines how their condition fits into their life and goals. Being able to navigate medical conversations alone is an essential step towards taking ownership of their chronic condition and transitioning to the adult health care system.

## *How to Support Your Teen Before the Doctor's Appointment*

Having one-on-one time with doctors has several benefits for teens. But every teen is different. Some teens may feel nervous or intimidated when invited to meet privately with their doctor. Some may prefer for you to stay in the room. You know your teen the best. If your teen is ready, encourage them to have one-on-one time with their doctor. If your teen is hesitant, try to understand why. You could ask, "What concerns do you have about meeting alone?" Or you could say, "Let me know if there's anything I can do to make it easier." When your child has alone time with the doctor, it doesn't mean your support isn't necessary. You are supporting them in a different way than you did when they were younger. You are helping them with the goal of becoming an independent, successful, and healthy adult. If your teen isn't ready, it's okay; there will be more opportunities for one-on-one time as they mature and get comfortable with their doctor.

## How much do you know about being H-YOU-Man!



1. How many bones are in the adult human body?  
A) 206    B) 300    C) 250    D) 150
2. What is the largest organ in the human body?  
A) Heart    B) Skin    C) Brain    D) Lungs
3. What is the average number of taste buds a person has?  
A) 100    B) 1,000    C) 10,000    D) 50,000
4. How many muscles do you need to smile?  
A) 2    B) 17    C) 43    D) 10
5. Which part of the human body can grow back if it is cut off?  
A) Heart    B) Fingers    C) Liver    D) Brain
6. Which is the fastest-growing part of the human body?  
A) Hair    B) Nails    C) Skin    D) Muscles
7. What is the smallest bone in the human body?  
A) Stapes (in the ear)    B) Tibia (shin bone)  
C) Finger bone    D) Skull bone
8. Which body part is made up of 80% water?  
A) Brain    B) Eyes    C) Skin    D) Heart
9. How many liters of blood does the average adult human body have?  
A) 4-5 liters    B) 2-3 liters    C) 7 liters    D) 10 liters

Key: 1. A) 206; 2. B) Skin; 3. C) 10,000; 4. A) 2; 5. C) Liver; 6. A) Hair; 7. A) Stapes (Ear Bone); 8. A) Brain; 9. A) 4-5 Liters

## Recipe: Cheese Fondue for Kids



### Ingredients - Fondue:

- 2 cups filtered apple juice
- 1 pound Gruyere cheese, shredded
- 2 tablespoons cornstarch
- 1/4 cup grated Parmesan
- 1/2 teaspoon country-style Dijon mustard
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

### Suggested Dippers:

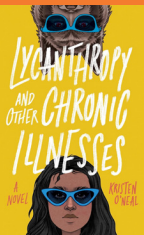
- Baguette torn into 1/2 inch chunks
- Tater tots
- Broccoli florets (raw or sauteed)
- Halved cherry tomatoes
- Pretzels or crackers
- Salami slices or chunks
- Apple slices (Granny smith or Honeycrisp are good options!)
- Cornichons or gherkins or pickles

### Directions:

Bring the apple juice to a simmer in a medium saucepan over medium heat. Toss the Gruyere and cornstarch in a medium bowl. Add to the simmering juice by the scant handful, whisking constantly until smooth and letting the sauce come to a boil between additions, about 30 seconds. Remove the saucepan from the heat, stir in the Parmesan and mustard and season with 1/2 teaspoon salt and a few grinds of pepper. Pour into a serving bowl, and serve with the dippers of your choice.

Recipe Courtesy of the Food Network. Never leave a child unattended in the kitchen. Limit the child to tasks that are safe and age-appropriate.

## Book Recommendations



### Lycanthropy and Other Chronic Illnesses: A Novel by Kristen O'Neal

A college student with Lyme disease and a werewolf become friends through an online support group. Priya was on the pre-med fast-track when she contracted Lyme disease. Now she spends all day laying in bed and scrolling Tumblr while her Indian American family hovers. Her one bright spot is her online friend Brigid

and the chronic illness support group that they joined together. When Priya meets Brigid, who is of Irish descent, in real life, she discovers that her friend's "illness" is lycanthropy. This book perfectly captures what it feels like to be chronically ill: How good days and flare-ups feel like they'll last forever, how needing familial help extends your childhood, and even the deep depression you feel when you realize that things may never get better. O'Neal adeptly mixes the magical with the realistic. Priya and Brigid's support group spans a variety of races, sexualities, and gender identities without feeling as if the author is checking off boxes.

### Ariana Rose: A Story of Courage



### Ariana Rose: A Story of Courage by Ariana Feiner

Follow Ariana Rose on a trip to the doctor and back to school as she uses a positive attitude to cope with her health condition. With its fun, rhyming verses and friendly presentation, Ariana Rose: A Story of Courage delivers an uplifting message about a delicate issue.

### The Brave Souls Club



### The Brave Souls Club by Danielle Viverito

The Brave Souls Club is an inspirational story that provides a positive answer to the question "WHY ME?" asked by kids who are sick battling illnesses and diseases, both rare and common. It is meant to give them a sense of control when everything around them seems to be so out of control. It's a sweet story that will hopefully leave the reader feeling like they are a true inspirational hero and an official member of The Brave Souls Club.