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Counseling Your Young and Adolescent Patients

You are in a unique position of being able to influence your younger patients' behavior, especially about sensitive topics that may affect their health.

Every day you see patients with an unhealthy BMI. The parents or guardians of our young members tell us they want to know how their child's BMI compares with other children the same age. Please calculate BMI and discuss it during the exam. Be sure to include counseling about nutrition and physical activity.



Kids tell us they hesitate having discussion with their health care providers about their risk behaviors because they are embarrassed and also because they are concerned about the confidentiality of their discussions. EmblemHealth strongly encourages you to assess your patients between ages 12 and 17 for risky behaviors and to give them guidance about avoidance. Topics should include:

- Risky behavior and preventive actions associated with sexual activity
- Depression and thoughts of self-harm
- Risks of tobacco usage
- Risks of substance abuse (including alcohol)

To help you assess which topics may need your attention, we have developed a [Health Survey for Adolescents](#). The survey was adapted from the Centers for Disease Control Youth Risk Behavior Survey and is available for [downloading](#) from our Web site. Asking your adolescent patients to complete the survey in the waiting room or while waiting in the exam room will help you quickly identify potential health risks. Be sure to put a copy in the patient's medical record.

To help you educate your young and adolescent patients about confidentiality, EmblemHealth has prepared a [Confidentiality Policy Poster](#), which we encourage you to post in every examination room. This poster is available for [downloading](#). The policy states: "Our discussions with you are private. We hope you will feel free to talk openly with us about yourself and your health. Information we discuss is not shared with anyone else without your permission unless we are concerned that you or someone else is in danger."

The time you spend providing guidance on maintaining healthy eating, social and exercising habits may help your patients make long-term changes that will improve their overall health.