

# Preventive care for growing bodies: ensuring healthy development in kids and teens.

Shin Kurose\*

Department of Oncology and Hemato-Oncology, University of Milan, Milan, Italy

## Introduction

Childhood and adolescence are critical stages of development, and the foundation for lifelong health is built during these formative years. Preventive care, which includes regular health assessments, vaccinations, and guidance on healthy lifestyle choices, plays a pivotal role in promoting well-being and preventing chronic diseases. Parents, educators, and healthcare providers must work together to create an environment that supports healthy development and equips children and teens with the tools to maintain their health as they grow [1,2,3].

### *Regular Health Check-Ups and Screenings*

Routine health check-ups are essential in identifying potential health issues early and ensuring that children and adolescents are developing properly [4,5,6,7]. These visits typically include growth assessments, immunizations, vision and hearing screenings, and tracking developmental milestones. Regular visits also provide an opportunity to discuss nutrition, physical activity, and mental health, allowing healthcare providers to offer guidance tailored to the child's or teen's specific needs.

### *Proper Nutrition for Growth and Development*

Adequate nutrition is a cornerstone of healthy development. A balanced diet that includes essential nutrients like protein, calcium, vitamins, and healthy fats supports physical growth, bone health, cognitive function, and immune system strength. Parents and caregivers must promote healthy eating habits by offering nutrient-dense foods and encouraging regular meal patterns, while limiting processed foods and sugary snacks. Early nutrition education helps set the stage for lifelong healthy eating habits [8,9,10].

### *Encouraging Physical Activity*

Physical activity is crucial for the development of strong muscles, bones, and cardiovascular health. It also promotes mental well-being, reducing the risk of stress, anxiety, and depression. Children and teens should engage in at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity each day, which can include activities like sports, outdoor play, walking, or cycling. Parents and educators should encourage active lifestyles by creating opportunities for physical activity and being active role models themselves.

### *Mental Health and Emotional Support*

Mental health is just as important as physical health in ensuring the overall well-being of children and adolescents. Preventive care should also focus on emotional and psychological support, including fostering open communication, promoting resilience, and addressing signs of mental health issues early. Educating children and teens about mental health, providing coping strategies for stress, and seeking professional help when needed are essential for healthy emotional development.

### *Building Healthy Habits Early*

Teaching children and teens healthy habits from an early age sets the foundation for a lifetime of wellness. This includes instilling habits such as regular handwashing, good sleep hygiene, staying hydrated, and avoiding harmful behaviors like smoking and excessive screen time. Creating a positive environment where healthy habits are modeled by parents and caregivers is crucial for reinforcing these behaviors.

### *Preventing risky behaviors*

As children transition into adolescence, they are more likely to experiment with risky behaviors, such as substance use or unsafe driving practices. Preventive care should include education on the risks associated with behaviors like smoking, alcohol consumption, and drug use, as well as strategies for saying no to peer pressure. Additionally, promoting safety through appropriate seatbelt use, helmet use, and supervised driving can prevent injuries and accidents.

## Conclusion

Preventive care for growing bodies is a fundamental aspect of ensuring that children and adolescents develop into healthy, well-adjusted adults. By focusing on nutrition, physical activity, regular check-ups, mental health support, and the prevention of risky behaviors, we can empower young people to make choices that benefit their long-term health. Collaboration between parents, educators, and healthcare providers is essential to create a supportive environment that nurtures healthy development and promotes lifelong well-being.

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\*Correspondence to: Shin Kurose, Department of Oncology and Hemato-Oncology, University of Milan, Milan, Italy, E-mail: Kurose.s89@unimi.it

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