
Middle Adolescence (15-17)

Middle adolescence continues to be a time of physical, emotional, cognitive and social development. Assessing and encouraging self-care skills are a transition priority at this age.

Having one-on-one time with adolescents during part of the preventive visit is key as this has been shown to increase the development of self-care skills, including adherence to care. This one-on-one time also begins the preparation for and a discussion about an adult model of care when the adolescent at age 18 becomes a legal adult, unless there are legal documents stating otherwise. Privacy and consent laws require that adolescents, ages 18 and older, need to explicitly agree to having others see their medical information.

An initial transition readiness skill assessment can be done with adolescents and parents/caregivers and repeated periodically throughout adolescence to learn what skills have been and still need to be acquired. Information from this readiness skill assessment can help to guide questions and anticipatory guidance and, if needed for those with special health care needs, be used to add goals in the adolescent's plan of care.

It is helpful to ask the importance and confidence questions on self-care and transferring to an adult health care clinician if these are not part of the practice's transition readiness skill assessment. These two questions follow a motivational interviewing strategy that has repeatedly been shown to lead to greater engagement in health care interventions and improved patient outcomes (see Table 1). Examples of a transition readiness tool with scorable confidence and importance questions are available for adolescents and parents/caregivers.^{1,2} Sample tools are also available for adolescents with intellectual and developmental disabilities (ID/DD) and their parents/caregivers.^{3,4} An additional transition preparation strategy is the preparation with the adolescent and parent/caregiver of a portable medical summary and, if needed for those with special health care needs, a plan of care with transition goals and actions. Sample medical summary and plan of care tools are also available.^{5,6} All of these tools can be found at the web links below.

This is also a good time to review the practice's approach to health care transition, noting changes that will happen in privacy and consent at age 18. For adolescents with ID/DD, it is important to ensure that a plan for decision-making support, including guardianship, is put in place before age 18. A useful resource on guardianship and decision-making support is available at the web link below.⁷

¹ <http://www.gottransition.org/resourceGet.cfm?id=224>

² <http://www.gottransition.org/resourceGet.cfm?id=225>

³ www.acponline.org/sites/default/files/documents/clinical_information/high_value_care/clinician_resources/pediatric_adult_care_transitions/gim_dd/idd_transition_readiness_assessment_for_youth.docx

⁴ https://www.acponline.org/system/files/documents/clinical_information/high_value_care/clinician_resources/pediatric_adult_care_transitions/gim_dd/idd_transitions_tools.pdf

⁵ <http://www.gottransition.org/resourceGet.cfm?id=226>

⁶ <http://www.gottransition.org/resourceGet.cfm?id=227>

⁷ <http://www.gottransition.org/resourceGet.cfm?id=17>

Sample Questions

Ask the adolescent:

Tell me about when you need to see your primary care and, if needed, specialist clinicians. What about when you would go to the emergency room and not your primary care clinician?

What questions do you have about the changes in privacy and consent that happen when you turn 18 and are legally an adult?

How important is it to you to manage your own health care (e.g., filling a prescription and taking your own medications, carrying around an insurance card, and scheduling your appointments)? Please rate 1-10 with 10 being most important. (See Table 1)

How confident are you about managing your own health care (e.g., filling a prescription and taking your own medications, carrying around an insurance card, and scheduling your appointments)? Please rate 1-10 with 10 being most confident. (See Table 1)

What questions do you have about your health, medical summary, or, if needed for adolescents with special health care needs, plan of care?

How comfortable do you feel asking your clinician questions?

Potential additional questions

Can you explain your medical condition and allergies to others?

Do you know how to get a copy of your medical information?

Have you thought about your plan to transfer to a clinician who cares for adults (e.g., when you go away to college)?

Our practice has a process to help you transition to a clinician who cares for adults. Do you have any questions about this process? How important is it to you to prepare for/transfer to a clinician who cares for adults? Please rate 1-10 with 10 being most important. (See Table 1)

How confident do you feel about your ability to prepare for/transfer to a clinician who cares for adults? Please rate 1-10 with 10 being most confident. (See Table 1)

Ask the parent/caregiver

Do you have any questions about the changes in privacy and consent that happen when your adolescent turns 18 and is legally an adult?

How are you encouraging your adolescent to build skills for managing their own health (e.g., explaining their medical condition to others, knowing when they need to take their medications or if they take their medication on their own)?

Potential additional questions

What questions do you have about your adolescent's health, medical summary, or, if needed for adolescents with special health care needs, plan of care?

Can I answer any questions about health care transition?

Anticipatory Guidance

For the adolescent:

- Let's discuss what happens when you turn 18 around medical privacy and consent. Information shared between us is confidential and cannot be shared with others, including your parents/caregivers, without your permission. For example, you have exclusive access to your electronic medical records. Let me explain our practice's approach to confidentiality and potential limits.
- Our practice's approach is to care for patients up to [insert age], when they transfer their care to a clinician who cares for adults. Part of our care for you includes preparing you for the transition to adult care. Closer to the time when you are ready to transfer, we can help you find an adult health care clinician and update your medical summary that can be sent (with your permission) to the next clinician.
- It is important for you to continue to come for regular preventive visits so you can be actively involved in your own health care. Based on your transition readiness skill assessment, let's decide on one or two goals to work towards between now and your next appointment.
- Remember that you can access your electronic medical records, which you can use to look up information about your own health and ask questions outside of the office visit.

(Anticipatory guidance for importance and confidence can be found in Table 1.)

For the parent/caregiver:

- It is important to understand that when your adolescent turns 18, they will be treated as a legal adult with regards to medical confidentiality and privacy (an adult model of care). Information shared between your adolescent and their clinician is confidential and cannot be shared with you without their permission. Let me explain our practice's approach to confidentiality and potential limits.
- As your adolescent prepares for an adult model of care, it is important that they gain skills to manage their health care (e.g., explaining their medical condition to others, knowing when they need to take their medications or if they take their medication on their own, and scheduling their own appointments).
- Our practice's approach is to care for patients up to [insert age], when they transfer their care to a clinician who cares for adults. Part of our care for your adolescent during this time is to prepare them for the transition to adult care. Closer to the time when they are ready to transfer, we can help to find an adult health care clinician and update their medical summary that can be sent (with their permission) to the next clinician.

(Anticipatory guidance for importance and confidence can be found in Table 1.)