

CMG Adolescent Health Screening

Each year in the United States there are millions of adolescents who are treated for substance abuse, mental health problems, and for issues related to their sexual health. For this reason, the **American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)**, and government agencies such as the **Centers for Disease and Prevention (CDC)** publish guidelines for the prevention, screening, and treatment of these problems. These guidelines are considered to be the “standard of care” to which all medical professionals who provide health services to the adolescent population are held.

In February 2014, the AAP published an update to its guidelines for adolescent healthcare. In these guidelines, it is recommended that all adolescents be asked about alcohol and drug use, symptoms of possible depression or other mental illness, and about any unprotected sexual activity or sexual abuse that they may have encountered. Those guidelines specifically recommend that all sexually active females be screened annually for the sexually transmitted disease chlamydia and that both adolescent males and females be offered screening for HIV infection between the ages of 16 and 18 years old.

It is well recognized that most adolescents will be much more forthcoming about their health history, especially when it comes to such sensitive issues as outlined above, if they are guaranteed the right to have a private discussion with a medical provider and to have their conversation kept confidential from their parents. In fact, the Federal *Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)* of 1996, as well as laws in almost every state including Georgia, grant this right to adolescents, so long as the information that they disclose is not considered a danger to themselves or others. In order to facilitate this discussion, and in order to be in full compliance with the guidelines set forth by the AAP, Federal Government agencies such as the CDC, and the State of Georgia, Children’s Medical Group will be offering a questionnaire for our adolescents to fill out at their wellness check-ups. During their visit with us, we would like to ask your permission to discuss the results of this questionnaire with your son or daughter in private for a few moments.

At Children’s Medical Group we realize that it can be very stressful to consider that your adolescent may be engaging in risky behaviors or that they may have undisclosed symptoms of mental illness. We will respect that you may want to decline this opportunity to have your adolescent participate in this exercise. At the same time, we must obey the law and provide confidential care to all adolescents who seek it when it comes to matters involving their mental or sexual health. Ultimately, most adolescents will be open and honest with their parents about the tough issues that they face, and we are often able to encourage them to do this.