

Dear Parent and Teen,

The transition from childhood to adulthood is marked by a number of developmental challenges. For many, the transition is smooth, while for others it is awkward and difficult. Teens are confronted with decisions that have consequences for their health - both physical and mental. Being a relatively healthy age group, it is often the behaviors based on these decisions that put them at risk for poor health conditions (e.g. substance abuse, sexually transmitted diseases, pregnancy, eating disorders etc.).

Understandably, many adolescents have concerns about confidentiality, wanted to protect the private nature of information shared during a health care visit. From a health care perspective, a confidential relationship facilitates the open disclosure of health histories and risky behaviors. In Massachusetts, medical treatment of minors requires parental (or guardian) consent, however, exceptions to this requirement include contraceptive services, STD services, and drug and alcohol treatment. After the age of 18, the patient controls access to his or her medical information and does not require parental consent for any medical treatment.

We at P.A.W. would like to provide an environment in which adolescents can openly discuss their concerns. Though we encourage and try to facilitate communication between teens and their parents, typically after the age of 12 , your health care provider may ask the parent to leave the room so we can discuss some of these sensitive issues confidentially. Please know that we commit to break this confidentiality if we strongly believe that the patient has plans to hurt him or herself or someone else.

Regarding vaccinations: Until the age of 18, vaccines will not be given without parental consent. Though we encourage parents to come to all well visit appointments, if a patients presents to our office without a parent or guardian, and they are due for an immunization, we will need to contact you.

We hope that together as a team we can help your family move smoothly through the challenging time of adolescence and keep your teen healthy.