

15 & 16 Years Old:



Social and Emotional Development

- Establishes friendships with peers of both genders; having friends and being “popular” are important.
- Continues to struggle with self-identity issues, especially if there are real or perceived differences from one’s peers (religious beliefs, biracial, sexual orientation, adopted, ethnicity, special needs); is sensitive to peer comments.
- Develops interest in forming serious romantic relationships.
- Has strong drive to achieve autonomy from family; dislikes parental authority and limits placed on activities.
- Is caring, cooperative, and responsible much of the time; temperamental, moody and rebellious on occasion, especially when wishes are not granted.
- Adopts clothing styles and behaviour of peer group; may also experiment with risky behaviours (illicit drugs, tattoos, body piercings, sexual activity, alcohol) to make a statement or gain acceptance.
- Recognizes right from wrong but makes some irresponsible decisions that contradict this understanding.



Growth and Physical Characteristics

- Weight gain varies by individual and depends on food intake, physical activity, and genetics.
- Continues to grow taller; boys, especially, experience rapid growth spurts. Girls reach their approximate adult height early in this period; males do so by the end of this stage.
- Wisdom teeth (third molars) may erupt.
- Still tires easily, especially following vigorous activity.
- Heart doubles in size and beats slower. Blood pressure reaches adult values (approximately 110/80); varies with child’s weight, activity, emotional state, and ethnicity (some groups are prone to higher blood pressure).
- Experiences fewer skin eruptions (acne) as hormone levels stabilize.
- Continues to undergo gradual body changes associated with puberty.
- Arms, legs, hands, and feet may still appear large and out of proportion to the rest of the body.
- Continues to add muscle mass, especially males but also girls who are athletically active.





Motor Development

- Motor coordination, speed, and endurance level off for girls; boys begin to surpass girls in these abilities and continue to improve until age twenty.
- Hand-eye coordination becomes more precise and controlled.
- Appears awkward and uncoordinated (clumsy) during periods of rapid growth; prone to more injuries during these times.



Speech and Language Development

- Solves abstract problems using deductive reasoning; is able to visualize or recall a concept, place, or thing without actually seeing or experiencing it at the time.
- Plans ahead; considers the pros and cons of several weekend activities before deciding on a final choice; makes hypothetical plans for the summer break; thinks about future career options.
- Uses scientific reasoning to solve increasingly complex problems; combines knowledge, experience, and logic to arrive at a solution or outcome.
- Becomes aware of a much larger world; is curious, eager for academic challenge, and interested in trying new things.
- Is able to focus attention on several activities at the same time: listens to music on headphones or watches television while doing homework.
- Recognizes that not all information is trustworthy; evaluates an information source before accepting it as reliable.



Perceptual-Cognitive Development

- Experiences modest gains in vocabulary; girls continue to score higher than boys on verbal abilities.
- Is capable of learning additional languages but requires more time and effort than when younger (an important consideration for schools given the numbers of non-English speaking children).
- Adjusts language and communication style according to the situation: conversing on the cellphone with friends, discussing a project with teachers, or texting in cyber slang.
- Uses increasingly complex grammar and sentence construction to express ideas.
- Spends considerable time engaged in social networking and communicating with friends; uses technology (texting, cellphone conversations, Internet, Facebook, 'tweeting').
- Understands and engages in adult humor.

References:

Marotz, L. & Allen K. (2013) *Developmental profiles: Pre-birth through adolescence* (Instructor's Edition). Belmont, CA:

Wadsworth, Cengage Learning.