



## Check It: Physical Health

What does caring for your physical health look like?



Caring for your physical health looks different for everyone. Here are some ways to start thinking about what could work for you.

### Section 1

#### [Why is it important to care for my physical health?](#)

Physical health can impact every aspect of your life. Making sure you are caring for your health can mean many different things—sleeping enough, eating properly, drinking enough, and being active.

### Section 2

#### [What is a Primary Care Physician? What things should I look for when choosing a Primary Care Physician?](#)

A Primary Care Physician (PCP) is a physician who serves as our first stop when it comes to keeping up with medical care for our bodies. Most PCPs are doctors; however, you may end up seeing a nurse practitioner or physician's assistant within the same office. Think of your PCP as your main point person when it comes to routine, non-emergency, medical care. There are many ways to search for PCPs in your area.



# NEED TO KNOW SERIES

## Check It: Physical Health

### Section 3

#### What are specialists? Why are they important?

Specialists focus on a certain part of your body or certain illnesses or disease. Learn more about how to get a specialist and what different specialists do.

### Section 4

#### How do I navigate care when I'm BIPOC and/or LGBTQ+? I want to find someone who's affirming and knowledgeable, how do I do that?

Navigating the healthcare system as a Black or Indigenous Person of Color (BIPOC) and/or a person who identifies as LGBTQ+ can be intimidating and sometimes overwhelming when you are looking for a provider who is culturally competent, knowledgeable, and affirming. There are many resources available to you that can help the process go a bit smoother.

### Section 5

#### How is my physical health linked to my mental health?

Your physical health is linked to your mental health in so many ways. If you don't care for your body, your mind likely won't feel good either. Learn more about how your mental health is linked to your physical health.

### Section 6

#### What is reproductive and sexual health? Why is it important?

It is important to be safe and informed about your reproductive and sexual health. It can impact your physical, emotional, and mental health. Learn more about how to take care of your reproductive and sexual health.

### Section 7

#### Why is it important to take care of my oral health and vision? How can I maintain good oral hygiene? How can I maintain the health of my vision?

Your oral health is important to maintain and, although many people aren't aware, it is directly connected to the rest of your health. The health of your vision is equally as important. Find out more about how you can improve and maintain your dental and vision care.

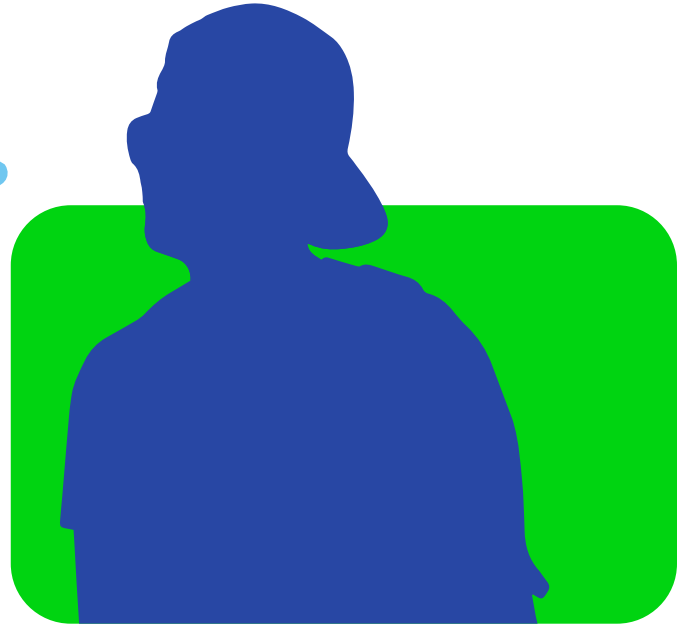
### Pro Tip

Don't forget—you have rights when in care to ensure access to physical health services and resources. For more information, view **"New York State Bill of Rights for Children and Youth in Foster Care"** ([https://ocfs.ny.gov/main/policies/external/OCFS\\_2015/ADMs/15-OCFS-ADM-18.pdf](https://ocfs.ny.gov/main/policies/external/OCFS_2015/ADMs/15-OCFS-ADM-18.pdf)).



**Why is it important to care for my physical health?**

Physical health can impact every aspect of your life. Making sure you are caring for your health can mean so many different things—sleeping enough, eating properly, drinking enough, and being active.



### Sleeping Enough

#### What is good sleep hygiene?

Most teenagers need about 8–10 hours of sleep a night. Good sleep hygiene is making sure your body is getting enough sleep so that you can function well. Listening to your body when you feel tired is important!

#### What causes shifts in my sleeping pattern?

- **Puberty** is the process everyone's body goes through. This is when your body physically becomes an adult. Puberty also affects your biological clock. After you hit puberty, your biological clock typically shifts about two hours—this means that you won't be tired until later in the day.

- **School and/or work** can impact your sleep schedule. Depending on how long it takes you to get to school, you may have to wake up earlier than some of your friends to get ready and arrive on time.
- **Social life and activities** may impact how much sleep you get—having late sports events or social activities may cause you to fall asleep later because you'll be out later. You may need extra time to wind down and get ready for bed.
- **Technology** can impact your sleep schedule. If you do not keep good boundaries around your technology usage, you may find yourself up later scrolling on social media. The blue light from your phone, TV, laptop, or tablet can confuse your brain into making it think that it is much earlier than it is.



### How does lack of sleep impact me?

Lack of sleep can impact so many different areas of your life, here are a few:

- **Mental health:** low mood, anxiety, irritability, and decision-making, as well as making depression and anxiety more challenging to manage
- **Emotional health:** difficulty managing emotions
- **Physical health:** increased risk of stroke, heart disease, and high blood pressure; immunity problems making you get sick easier
- **Academic performance:** lack of focus, sleeping in class, memory difficulties, and being late
- **Friendships:** irritability due to lack of sleep may impact relationships
- **Work life:** late to work, lack of focus, memory difficulties, irritability
- **Athletic performance:** physical tiredness, difficulty recovering from athletic activities, poor physical health, and lack of focus
- **Decision-making skills:** lack of focus and difficulty managing emotions when making a decision



### How do I keep a good sleep routine?

- Limit screen time before bed
- Have a sleep-friendly space that is dark, quiet (or includes soothing sounds such as rain playing), includes a comfortable bed with pillows and blankets that feel right for you, and is at a temperature that you like—Check out the Sleep Foundation at <https://www.sleepfoundation.org/bedroom-environment/how-to-design-the-ideal-bedroom-for-sleep> for ways to make your space sleep-friendly.
- Keep a regular bedtime
- Avoid sugary drinks and caffeine before bed
- Don't nap too long during the day and aim for 90 minutes or less—Check out these tips on napping from The Sleep Doctor at <https://thesleepdoctor.com/napping/how-long-is-the-ideal-nap>



### Eating and Drinking Properly

#### What is proper nutrition and hydration? How does it impact me?

Proper nutrition can be unique for each person. We all have different diets, scheduled eating times, food preferences, and metabolisms. It's important to be mindful of what your body needs.

#### What is metabolism?

Metabolism is what changes the food we eat into energy. There are several hormones in your body that control the rate of each person's metabolism. Our bodies all have unique rates of doing this so some people may need to eat more frequently than others. See the resource section to learn more.

#### Why is it important to keep an eating schedule?

Having a consistent eating schedule allows your body to prepare to digest food, which is essential to keeping good digestive health. Healthy digestion impacts the rest of your body, including your brain! See the resource section to learn more.

#### What kind of food should I be eating?

Each person's body needs a well-balanced diet to maintain their physical health. There are many recommendations for what this may look like, but each person's body may respond differently to different foods.



### How much should I drink a day? Does it matter what I drink?

It is recommended that people drink half their body weight, in ounces, of water each day. It's important to spread this throughout the day so you don't experience nausea. This is a general guideline so you should check with your doctor about how much water you should be drinking. Staying hydrated can help improve your ability to think, function, and improve your overall well-being. Learn more in the resource section.

### How can my eating and drinking habits impact me?

#### Here are some of the impacts of not eating healthy:

- Disease (such as diabetes and heart disease)
- Poor immune system—getting sick easier
- Obesity
- Lack of focus and tiredness

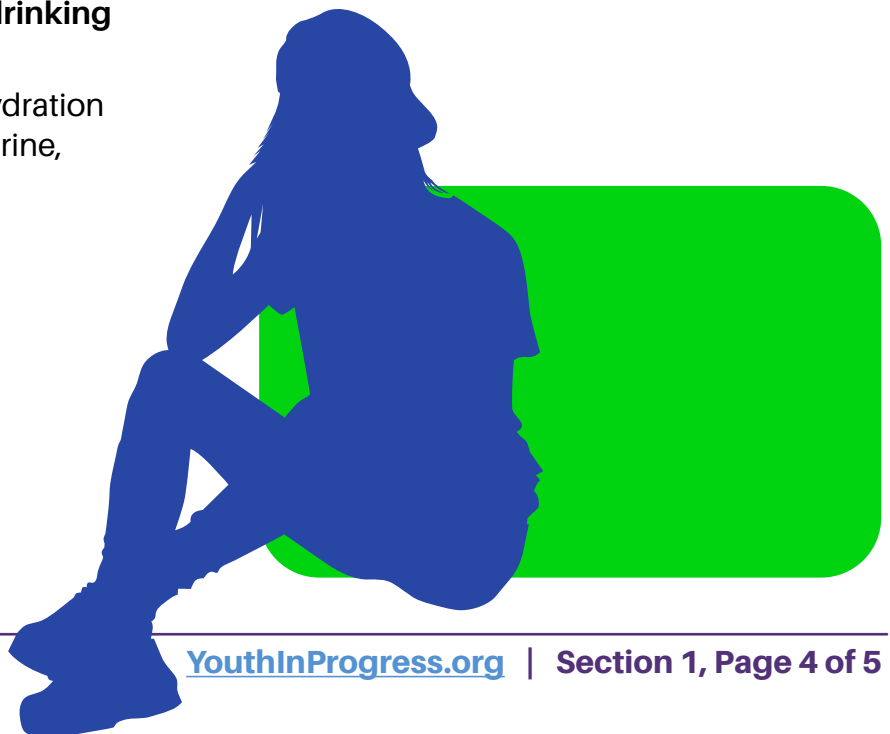
#### Here are some of the impacts of not drinking enough water:

- Dehydration—learn the signs of dehydration such as extreme thirst, dark-colored urine, confusion, dizziness, etc.
- Constipation
- Dry skin
- Low energy
- Headaches

### Being Active

#### What does it mean to be active?

Moving your body is important to maintaining your physical health. Setting aside time for exercise can have a big impact on your overall health and well-being. This can be as simple as finding time for a walk or a run, participating in a sport, or joining a local recreational center or gym. Making exercise a daily habit can be achieved in many ways. You don't have to get your daily exercise in all at once. Consider breaking up your exercise into manageable chunks. Doing 10 minutes of exercise 3 times a day has the same benefit as doing 30 minutes once a day. Find creative ways to fit activity into your day. Check out Better Health's article about how to get active when you are busy at <https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/Physical-activity-how-to-get-active-when-you-are-busy> for ways to fit activity into your day to achieve a healthy lifestyle.







# NEED TO KNOW SERIES

## Check It: Physical Health

Section 1.5

### Resources

- Children’s Hospital of Orange County (CHOC): **“Sleep Hygiene for Teens”**  
<https://www.choc.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Sleep-Hygiene-Teen-Handout.pdf>
- Sleep Foundation: **“Teens and Sleep”**  
<https://www.sleepfoundation.org/teens-and-sleep>
- Johns Hopkins All Children’s Hospital: **“Why Sleep is Important for Teens”**  
<https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/all-childrens-hospital/services/pediatric-and-adolescent-medicine/healthy-weight-initiative/ages-12-17/why-sleep-is-important-for-teens>
- Nemours Teens Health: **“Metabolism”**  
<https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/metabolism.html>
- MedlinePlus: **“Nutrition”**  
<https://medlineplus.gov/nutrition.html>
- Mayo Clinic: **“Dehydration”**  
<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/dehydration/symptoms-causes/syc-20354086>
- Mayo Clinic: **“Nutrition and Healthy Eating”**  
<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/nutrition-and-healthy-eating/in-depth/water/art-20044256>
- Chear, University of California San Diego School of Medicine: **“Scheduled Eating— Why It’s Beneficial and How to Start”**  
<https://chear.ucsd.edu/blog/scheduled-eating-why-its-beneficial-and-how-to-start>
- WebMD: **“How to Improve Your Gut Health and Mental Health”**  
<https://www.webmd.com/digestive-disorders/how-to-improve-your-gut-health-and-mental-health>
- U.S. News & World Report: **“How Nutrition Affects Teens’ Mental Health”**  
<https://health.usnews.com/health-care/for-better/articles/2018-05-10/how-nutrition-affects-teens-mental-health>
- New York State Department of Health: **“Drink Water!”**  
[https://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/nutrition/sugary\\_beverages](https://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/nutrition/sugary_beverages)
- My Plate, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA): **“Healthy Eating for Teens”**  
<https://www.myplate.gov/tip-sheet/healthy-eating-teens>
- Mayo Clinic: **“Fitness Program: 5 Steps to Get Started”**  
<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/fitness/in-depth/fitness/art-20048269>
- Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health: **“Make Exercise a Daily Habit— 10 Tips”**  
<https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/2013/11/04/making-exercise-a-daily-habit-10-tips>



### What is a Primary Care Physician? What things should I look for when choosing a Primary Care Physician?

Your Primary Care Physician (PCP) is your main healthcare provider. Your PCP provides preventative care (care provided before disease is present) and discusses any medical concerns you may have. Think of your PCP as your point person when it comes to routine, non-emergency, health care needs. If they don't have an answer for one of your medical concerns, they are able to connect you with another provider who does, like a specialist. Your Primary Care Physician can help you when it comes to connecting with a specialist. Most PCPs are medical doctors; however, you may end up seeing a nurse practitioner or physician assistant within the same office. A physician assistant works with a medical doctor and a nurse practitioner provides care without the need of a medical doctor and can specialize in various medical fields.



#### Your PCP's role:

- Provide preventative care and teach healthy lifestyle choices
- Identify and treat medical conditions
- Assess the urgency of your medical problems and direct you to the best place for care
- Make referrals to medical specialists when necessary
- Provide you with routine physicals, wellness screenings (sometimes these are surveys you answer and/or tests you are given like bloodwork), and immunizations (these include vaccines)

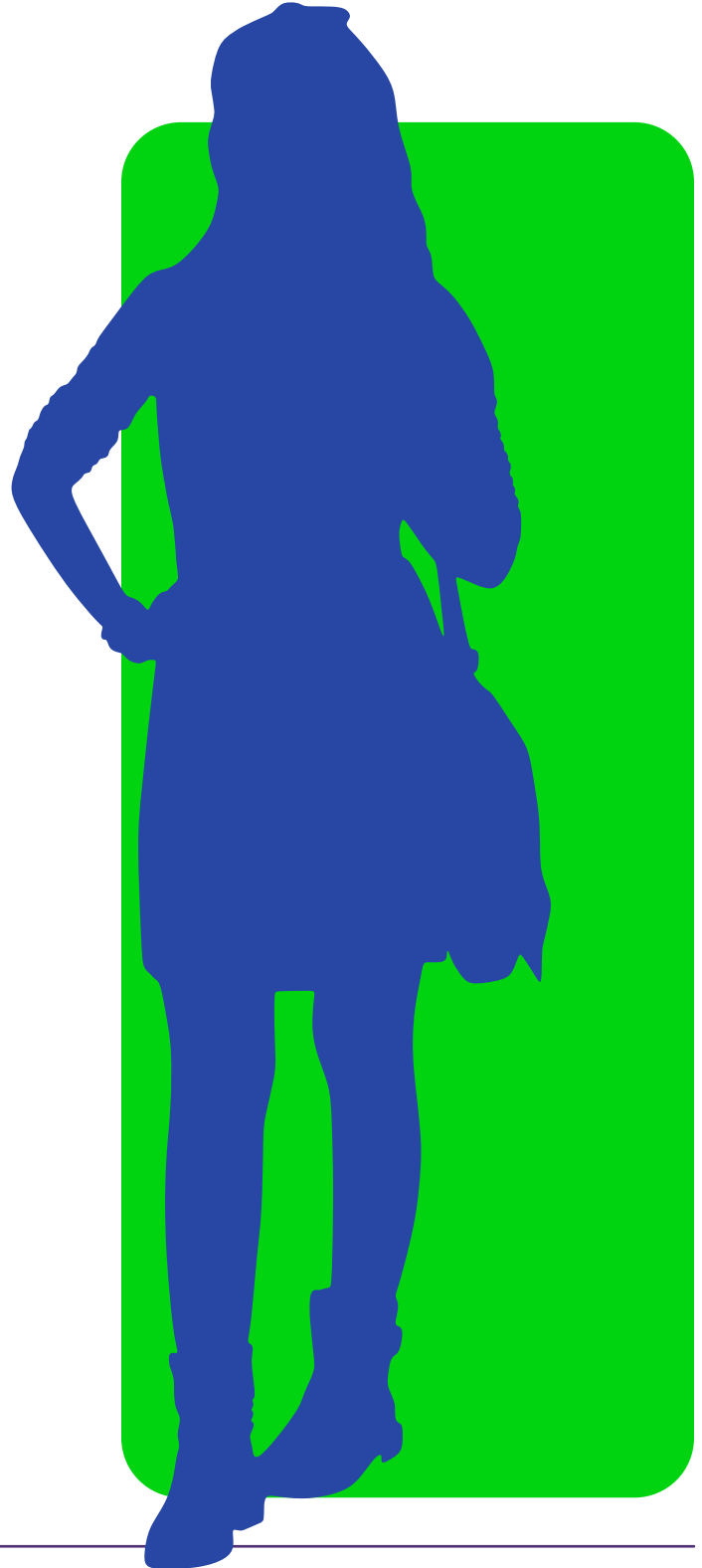
Check out MedlinePlus "Choosing a Primary Care Provider" at <https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001939.htm> for more information on the role your PCP has when it comes to providing you with services.





### Things to consider when choosing a PCP:

- Are the office staff friendly and helpful?
- Is their location easy for you to get to?
- Do you have a preference around race or gender that aligns with how you identify?
- Are they able to connect you with other providers in your area when you have a specific medical concern?
- Do they accept your insurance? (See link under Resources.)
- Is it difficult to make an appointment with this doctor? Are they easily reachable? Can you reach out via email and/or phone? Do they have an online website where you can communicate and access your records (sometimes called a patient portal)?
- Are there reviews available for your provider? What are the other patients' experiences like?
- Do you feel like your voice is respected when seeing this provider? Are you as much of a part of the medical decision process as your PCP is?





### Tips to prepare for your first appointment with your PCP:

- Transfer your medical records/history. Whenever you change doctors or go to a new health care provider you will need to have your records transferred from your current or past health care provider to the new provider. This will involve signing a consent form giving your permission for the records to be sent out. The new medical provider that you are going to can help you with this process.
- Bring a list of your medications with you, including the dose you take. Be sure to also include anything you take that is not prescribed, like vitamins and over the counter pain medications.
- Prepare a list of questions about any medical problems you're experiencing and/or questions about your PCP and their office.
- Don't be afraid to ask questions. Your concerns are valid, and your provider is there to help.
- Consider having a friend or a family member tag along to your first appointment.

Find more information about these tips at Dot Health "Ask Dr. M: How Should I Prepare to See a New Doctor?" <https://www.dothehealth.ca/post/ask-dr-m-how-should-i-prepare-to-see-a-new-doctor>.



# NEED TO KNOW SERIES

## Check It: Physical Health

Section 2.4

### What to expect during your appointment:

Usually, a nurse at your PCP's practice will take your vitals (Blood Pressure/Temperature/oxygen level) and ask you if anything's changed since the last time you visited. If you're new to this provider, they may ask you about any current medications you're taking and/or your medical history. They may confirm with you why you're visiting the practice and ask you if you're experiencing any discomfort or pain. Once they collect your information, they'll pass along the things you discussed to your doctor, and the next step will be meeting with the PCP, physician assistant, or nurse practitioner. Check out Dignity Health's **"Talking to Your Doctor: 7 Things to Cover at a New Patient Visit"** <https://www.dignityhealth.org/articles/talking-to-your-doctor-7-things-to-cover-at-a-new-patient-visit> for a few things to think about discussing with your PCP during your first appointment.

If the medical provider does not feel like a good fit, you can always request to be assigned to someone different in the office (if they have multiple medical providers at the same location) or go to a completely new office that is covered by your insurance.

If you haven't been able to connect with a PCP yet and are experiencing a non-emergency medical issue, visit your local urgent care, and if the problem gets worse or becomes life-threatening be sure to seek treatment at the emergency room. Here's a great resource that helps you understand when to visit an emergency room, urgent care, or walk-in clinic: Scripps **"Should You Go to the Emergency Room or Urgent Care?"** [https://www.scripps.org/news\\_items/4231-should-you-go-to-the-emergency-room-or-urgent-care](https://www.scripps.org/news_items/4231-should-you-go-to-the-emergency-room-or-urgent-care).





# NEED TO KNOW SERIES

## Check It: Physical Health

Section **2.5**

### Resources

- For more information about making a plan to meet your medical needs see the Youth in Progress **Need To Know Series: Your Transition to Self-Sufficiency and Preparing Youth for Success: The Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood** at <https://youthinprogress.org/resources/digital-printable-handouts/need-to-know-series>.
- To locate a doctor, go to: **New York State Provider & Health Plan Look-Up** <https://pndslookup.health.ny.gov>
- For more about the federal health insurance program, go to: **New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) Former Foster Care Youth and the Affordable Care Act and SUPPORT Act** <https://ocfs.ny.gov/main/sppd/health-services/affordable-care-act.php>
- WebMD: **“What is a Primary Care Physician?”** <https://www.webmd.com/a-to-z-guides/what-is-a-primary-care-physician>
- Verywell Health: **“Primary Care Provider (PCP)”** <https://www.verywellhealth.com/pcp-what-is-a-primary-care-physician-1738758>
- Preferred Medical Group: **“What to Expect With Your First Appointment”** <https://preferredmedgroup.com/what-to-expect-with-your-first-appointment>



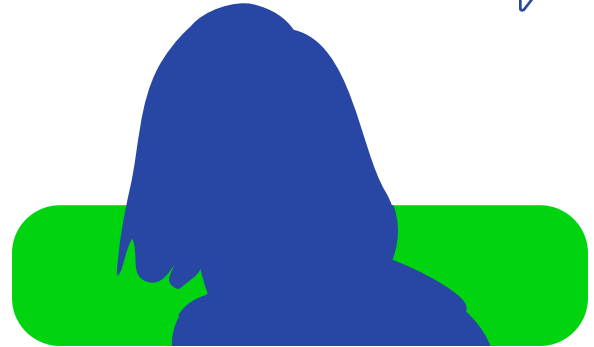


# NEED TO KNOW SERIES

## Check It: Physical Health

Section **3.1**

**What are specialists?  
Why are they important?**



Specialists focus on a certain part of your body or certain illnesses or disease.

### What are some of the different kinds of specialists and what do they do?

#### Orthodontist

An orthodontist is a dentist that specializes in treating issues related to your teeth and jaw (like crooked teeth—orthodontists are in charge of braces). Learn more about orthodontists and what they do here: <https://orthodonticsaustralia.org.au/what-is-an-orthodontist>.

#### Endocrinologist

An endocrinologist specializes in diagnosing and treating disorders within your endocrine system (the system that manages your hormones). Learn more about an endocrinologist and what they do here: <https://www.webmd.com/a-to-z-guides/what-is-an-endocrinologist>.

#### OB-GYN

An obstetrician-gynecologist (OB-GYN) can address any issues, or just general check-ups, for your reproductive and sexual health. Learn more about OB-GYNs and what they do here: <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/324292#what-is-an-ob-gyn>.

#### Dermatologist

A dermatologist specializes in addressing any skin irregularities, such as rashes, acne, and more. Learn more about what a dermatologist is and what they do here: <https://www.healthline.com/find-care/articles/dermatologists/what-is-a-dermatologist>.

#### Gastroenterologists

A gastroenterologist specializes in the health of your digestive system. Learn more about what a gastroenterologist does here: [https://www.medicinenet.com/whats\\_gastroenterologist/article.htm](https://www.medicinenet.com/whats_gastroenterologist/article.htm).

For a full list of specialists visit St. George's University School of Medicine "The Ultimate List of Medical Specialties and Subspecialties" at <https://www.sgu.edu/blog/medical/ultimate-list-of-medical-specialties>.



### Resources

- WebMD: **“What Are the Different Types of Doctors?”**  
<https://www.webmd.com/health-insurance/insurance-doctor-types>
- Orthodontics Australia (OA): **“What Does an Orthodontist Do?”**  
<https://orthodonticsaustralia.org.au/what-is-an-orthodontist>
- Nemours Teens Health: **“Gyn Checkups”**  
<https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/obgyn.html>
- SteadyHealth: **“OBGYN Virgins: What Teens Should Expect From Their First Gynecologist Appointment”**  
<https://www.steadyhealth.com/articles/obgyn-virgins-what-teens-should-expect-from-their-first-gynecologist-appointment>
- Medical News Today: **“What is an OB-GYN?”**  
<https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/324292#what-is-an-ob-gyn>
- Healthline: **“What Is a Dermatologist and How Can They Help You?”**  
<https://www.healthline.com/find-care/articles/dermatologists/what-is-a-dermatologist>
- MedicineNet: **“What Is a Gastroenterologist?”**  
[https://www.medicinenet.com/whats\\_gastroenterologist/article.htm](https://www.medicinenet.com/whats_gastroenterologist/article.htm)







How do I navigate care when I'm BIPOC and/or LGBTQ+? I want to find someone who's affirming and knowledgeable, how do I do that?



Finding a provider who's affirming and knowledgeable may be your goal as a Black or Indigenous Person of Color (BIPOC) and/or a person that identifies as a LGBTQ+. There are both affirming and knowledgeable providers out there.



### Here are a few tips and questions to assist you in the process!

History has shown that BIPOC have faced different sets of challenges in their health outcomes, compared to those who aren't. Navigating the healthcare system can be a difficult task because you want to find a provider who recognizes the different health challenges you may encounter throughout your life. Check out Kaiser Family Foundation's "**Disparities in Health and Health Care: 5 Key Questions and Answers**" at <https://www.kff.org/racial-equity-and-health-policy/issue-brief/disparities-in-health-and-health-care-5-key-questions-and-answers> for more information about the challenges BIPOC have faced throughout history and now.



### Here are some things to look for when seeking out a new provider:

- Do they actively listen when you bring up medical concerns?
- Do they have good reviews from other BIPOC?
- What does their patient demographic look like? Do they serve diverse patients?

If you're BIPOC and looking for a new provider, here's a resource for you to check out:

Healthline: **"Race and Medicine: How to Find Medical Care When You're Black"** <https://www.healthline.com/health/how-to-find-medical-care-when-black>.

### Things to look for when seeing a new provider when you identify as LGBTQ+:

- Do they actively listen when you bring up medical concerns?
- Do they have good reviews from others that identify as LGBTQ+?
- What does their patient diversity look like? Do they serve diverse patients?
- Are there any red flags? (Things that make you feel unaffirmed, unsafe, or uncomfortable)
- Are there any green flags? (Things that make you feel affirmed, safe, and comfortable)
- Do you have any friends/peers who go to this practice? What's their experience been like?

Here's a resource on things to look for when searching for a new provider: Healthline **"Tips for Finding a Healthcare Professional Who's an LGBTQIA+ Ally"** <https://www.healthline.com/health/mental-health/find-lgbtq-ally-health-provider#finding-professionals>.

Be sure to check out the **Need to Know Series: LGBTQ+: The Breakdown** at <https://youthinprogress.org/resources/digital-printable-handouts/need-to-know-series> for additional resources and information!

There are many resources available about how to navigate the mental health system as BIPOC and/or LGBTQ+. Check out the following resource section and the **Need to Know Series: Counseling 101** at <https://youthinprogress.org/resources/digital-printable-handouts/need-to-know-series> for more information!





### Resources

- American Bar Association: **“Implicit Bias and Racial Disparities in Health Care”**  
[https://www.americanbar.org/groups/crsj/publications/human\\_rights\\_magazine\\_home/the-state-of-healthcare-in-the-united-states/racial-disparities-in-health-care](https://www.americanbar.org/groups/crsj/publications/human_rights_magazine_home/the-state-of-healthcare-in-the-united-states/racial-disparities-in-health-care)
- Massachusetts General Hospital: **“Racism and Your Health: Resources for Young Adults”**  
<https://www.massgeneral.org/children/social-determinants-of-health/racism-and-your-health-resources-for-young-adults>





How is my physical health linked to my mental health?

Your mental and physical health work together hand in hand. If you're not feeling the best mentally, you probably aren't feeling the best physically. It can be hard to bring yourself to take care of your physical health when you're struggling with emotional wellness and experiencing things like mood fluctuations, anxiety, sadness, and/or depression; but taking care of your body and participating in physical activity may help lessen these symptoms.



**Here are some tips to take care of yourself physically and mentally:**

### Get regular exercise

Your body will release endorphins (feel good hormones) and other brain chemicals that improve the way you feel both physically and mentally. Additionally, exercise is a great coping skill to implement when you're struggling with your mental health. Getting outside for a walk, even if it's only 10 to 15 minutes daily, may improve your mood.



## NEED TO KNOW SERIES

### Check It: Physical Health

Section **5.2**

#### Get the proper nutrients your body needs throughout the day

Nutrients are a part of maintaining or improving your mental health by paying attention to what you need to maintain your physical health. Your PCP or a nutritionist can help you with a diet that works best for you. [Check out the Additional Resources in Section 1](#) for more information on nutritional health.

#### Try to limit exposure to things like alcohol, drugs and/or smoking

There is a direct correlation between substance use and mental illnesses such as depression and anxiety. Check out GoodRx Health “**How Drug and Alcohol Addiction Impacts Your Mind, Body, and Health**” at <https://www.goodrx.com/conditions/substance-use-disorder/physical-neurological-effects-of-addiction> for more information.

#### Develop a healthy sleep schedule

If you’re between the ages of 14–17 years old, on average you need about 8–10 hours of sleep per night. Once you are 18 or older your body needs around 7–9 hours of sleep per night. Check out Sleep Foundation “**How Much Sleep Do You Need?**” at <https://www.sleepfoundation.org/how-sleep-works/how-much-sleep-do-we-really-need> and the [Additional Resources Section 1](#) for more information.

#### Incorporate relaxation techniques into your daily routine (yoga, deep breathing exercises, meditation, etc.)

Stress management is an important part of keeping up with your physical health. By participating in things like yoga, meditation, and/or deep breathing exercises, you’re working to decrease the negative effects that stress can have on your body. Check out Mayo Clinic “**Stress Management**” at <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/in-depth/relaxation-technique/art-20045368> for more information on different relaxation techniques and how they can positively impact your body.

#### Don’t be afraid to reach out for help or lean on someone you trust for support

Keeping up with both your physical and mental health can be challenging, it’s completely okay to reach out for assistance. Your PCP and/or counselor/therapist are great resources for any questions you may have. [Check out Additional Resources in Section 2](#) to learn more about finding a PCP in your area and **The Need to Know Series: Counseling 101** <https://youthinprogress.org/resources/digital-printable-handouts/need-to-know-series> to find out ways to connect with a therapist in your area.



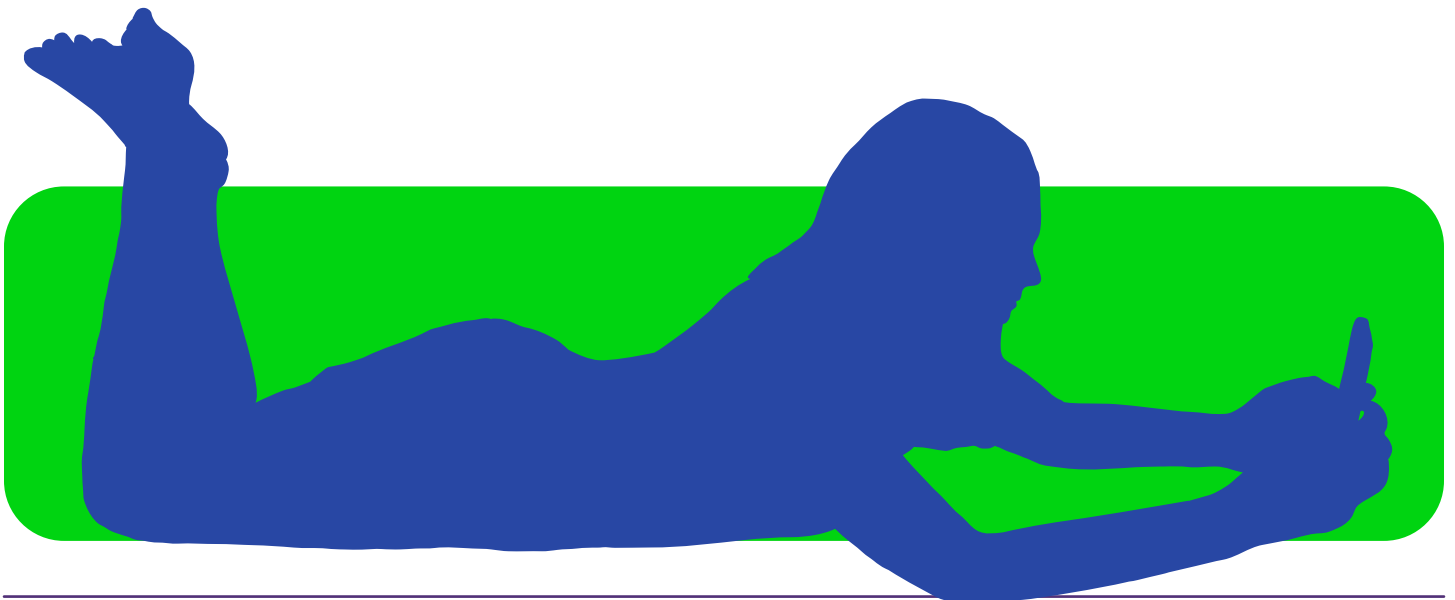
# NEED TO KNOW SERIES

## Check It: Physical Health

Section **5.3**

### Resources

- PsychCentral: **“Find a Therapist: Mental Health Resources for Everyone”**  
<https://psychcentral.com/health/mental-health-resources>
- Hillside: **“The Link Between Physical and Mental Health”**  
<https://hside.org/link-between-physical-and-mental-health>
- Mayo Clinic: **“Depression and Anxiety: Exercise Eases Symptoms”**  
<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/depression/in-depth/depression-and-exercise/art-20046495>
- Mayo Clinic: **“Sleep Tips: 6 Steps to Better Sleep”**  
<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/sleep/art-20048379>
- Kenosha Community Health Center, Inc. (KCHC): **“5 Ways Drugs and Alcohol Affect Your Mental Health”**  
<https://www.kenoshachc.org/2018/07/30/5-ways-drugs-alcohol-affect-mental-health>
- Advent Health: **“10 Health Benefits of Relaxation, Plus Tips to Help You Unwind”**  
<https://www.adventhealth.com/blog/10-health-benefits-relaxation-plus-tips-help-you-unwind>
- Harvard Health Publishing, Harvard Medical School: **“Six Relaxation Techniques to Reduce Stress”**  
<https://www.health.harvard.edu/mind-and-mood/six-relaxation-techniques-to-reduce-stress>







**What is reproductive and sexual health? Why is it important?**

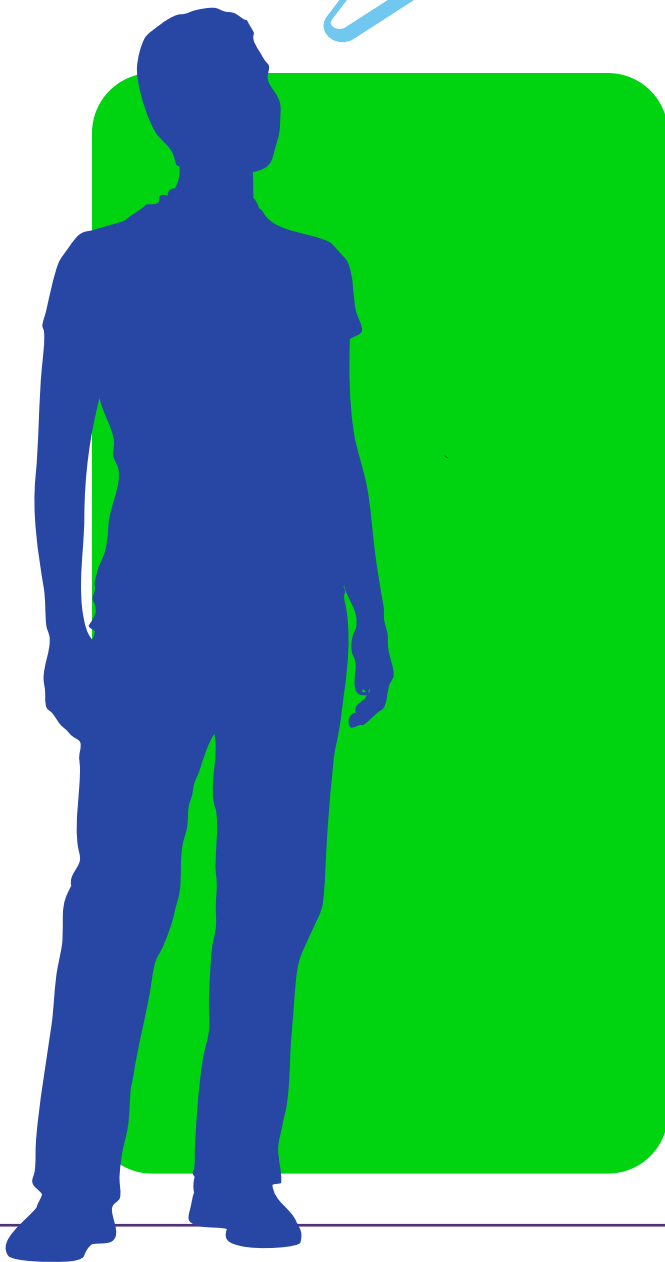
It is important to be safe and informed about your reproductive and sexual health. Your reproductive and sexual health impact your physical, emotional, and mental health, including the effect of hormones in both male and female bodies.

### **What is puberty?**

Puberty is the process everyone's body goes through. This is when your body physically becomes an adult. During this time, you will likely feel more intense emotions and your body will experience several changes.

### **How do I have safe sex?**

There are many ways to have safe sex. The first step to having safe sex is making sure you are being sexually active with someone who respects your boundaries and someone you trust. To help prevent transmission of Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) and Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), always use a condom, even when you have oral or anal sex. Check out the resources for more information about STDs/STIs and how to stay safe, as well as how to receive services and education from providers listed on the New York State Department of Health website in the resources section.





### How do I prevent pregnancy?

Choosing a birth control method that is right for you is an important decision when you become sexually active. There are a variety of effective ways to prevent pregnancy and having a conversation with your medical provider is a good first step. You may want to research your options as well. Go to Planned Parenthood “Birth Control” at <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/learn/birth-control> to find out more about the birth control methods that may be available to you.

### What if I’m pregnant?

You can begin by contacting your PCP or OB-GYN. If you do not have an OB-GYN, your PCP can help you find one. If you need a provider, check out the link in the resources section from the New York State Department of Health to find a family planning provider near you. You can also explore the Youth in Progress Need to Know “Pregnancy and Parenting Issues” at <https://youthinprogress.org/resources/digital-printable-handouts/need-to-know-series/need-to-know-series-pregnancy>.

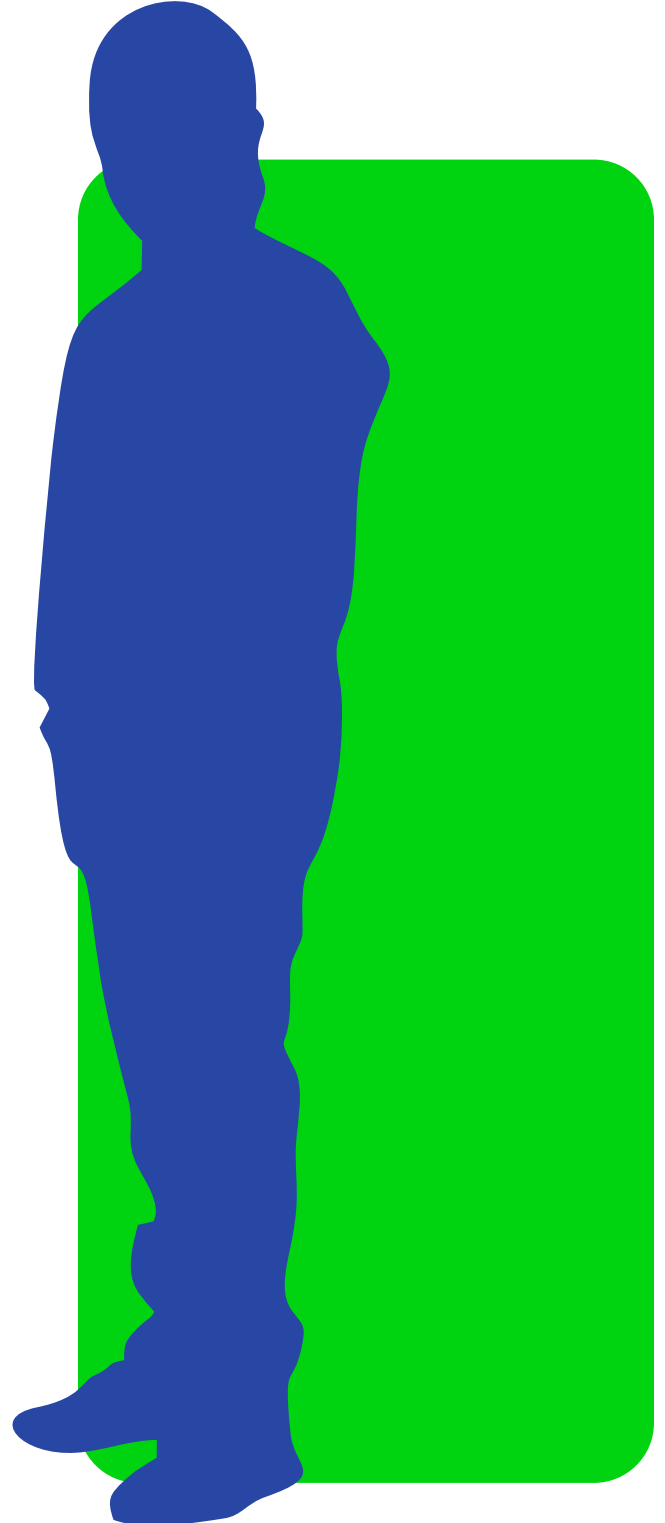
### How do I know if I have STDs or STIs?

You won’t always know if you have an STD or STI. You can always schedule an appointment with your Primary Care Physician or OB-GYN ([check out section 1 for more information](#)) and they can order blood tests or perform other necessary tests to find a result. You can also receive testing at providers listed on the New York State Department of Health link in the resources section.



### Resources

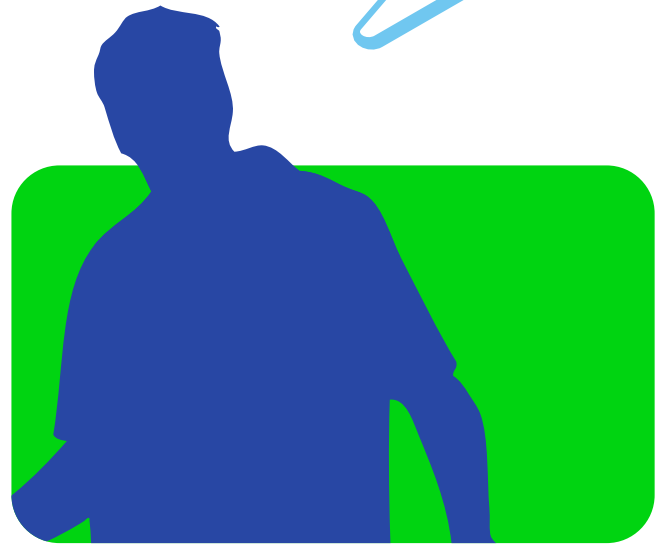
- New York State Department of Health: **“Comprehensive Family Planning and Reproductive Health Care Services Program”**  
[https://www.health.ny.gov/community/pregnancy/family\\_planning](https://www.health.ny.gov/community/pregnancy/family_planning)  
This site provides a state-wide list of providers that offer testing and treatment of STDs/STIs, family planning services, breast and cervical cancer screenings, and birth control education and services.
- Nemours Teens Health: **“Sexual Health & Reproductive System”**  
<https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/diseases-conditions/sexual-health>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): **“Reproductive Health: Tips For Teens”**  
[https://www.cdc.gov/reproductive-health/teen-pregnancy/teens.html?CDC\\_AAref\\_Val=https://www.cdc.gov/teenpregnancy/teens](https://www.cdc.gov/reproductive-health/teen-pregnancy/teens.html?CDC_AAref_Val=https://www.cdc.gov/teenpregnancy/teens)
- Planned Parenthood: **“For Teens”**  
<https://www.plannedparenthood.org/learn/teens>
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: **Talk with Your Teen About Preventing STIs**  
<https://health.gov/myhealthfinder/health-conditions/hiv-and-other-stds/talk-your-teen-about-preventing-stis>





**Why is it important to take care of oral health and vision?**

**How can I maintain good oral hygiene?**



### How often should I go to the dentist?

It's important to maintain good oral hygiene for many reasons. The main reason is that it's connected to the rest of your health. Not caring well for your oral health can impact your overall well-being. If you don't care well for your oral health, you can develop infections and other illnesses. It can also cause you to lose your teeth.

It is recommended that you have a check-up with your dentist about every six months. If you are having trouble finding a dentist, call the number on the back of your insurance card and they should be able to help you. Check out this link from the Department of Health to help you find a dentist: [https://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/dental/finding\\_dental\\_provider.htm](https://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/dental/finding_dental_provider.htm).

### What if my teeth aren't straight?

If you are unhappy with your teeth (whether they are gapped, overlapping, you have an overbite, or if you have problems with your wisdom teeth) you may be referred to an orthodontist. [Learn more about what an orthodontist is in Section 3.](#)

### What if I have cavities?

If you have cavities, you want to get to a dentist right away to find out what the next best steps are. It is important to have your cavities repaired in a timely manner so that it doesn't lead to more serious health issues. Poor oral health can lead to infections traveling to your heart due to bacteria and germs from your teeth and gums; pregnancy and birth complications, and pneumonia to name a few. Check out Mayo Clinic "Oral Health: A Window to Your Overall Health" at <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/dental/art-20047475> to learn more about how your oral health impacts your overall health.



**How can I maintain the health of my vision?**

- Get an eye exam once a year
- Eat a healthy diet
- Avoid smoking
- Wear sunglasses
- Reduce eyestrain from computer or phone use by taking breaks from looking at the screen
- Check out the Medline Plus website under resources for more tips on how to maintain healthy vision.

### **How often should I go to the eye doctor?**

You should get an eye exam every year or sooner if your vision changes. Certain diseases can impact your vision such as diabetes, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol to name a few.

There are three types of people who you can go to for your vision: An optometrist, an ophthalmologist, and an optician. An optometrist is a doctor and checks your eyes for both vision and illness and can prescribe eyeglasses or contact lenses. An ophthalmologist is a medical doctor and does the same as an optometrist, but also provides eye surgery services. An optician is not a doctor, but holds a certificate, and uses a prescription from an optometrist or an ophthalmologist to fit and sell glasses. To find a provider, contact your health insurance plan.





### Resources

- Aurora Dental Group (ADG): **“How to Know When Your Teenager Should Go to the Dentist”**  
<https://auroradentalgroup.com/blog/how-to-know-when-your-teenager-should-go-to-the-dentist>
- Dental Health Society: **“I Think I Have a Cavity—What Now? Advice from a Dentist”**  
<https://dentalhealthsociety.com/fillings/i-think-i-have-a-cavity-what-now-advice-from-a-dentist>
- Central Park Dentistry: **“Why Visiting the Dentist at a Young Age Is Important”**  
<http://kidsdentistrynyc.com/why-visiting-the-dentist-at-a-young-age-is-important>
- MedlinePlus: **“Dental Care—Adult”**  
<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001957.htm>
- MedlinePlus: **“Eye Care”**  
<https://medlineplus.gov/eyecare.html>
- New York State Department of Health: **“Frequently Asked Questions: What can be done to protect my vision?”**  
[https://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/conditions/vision\\_and\\_eye\\_health/frequently\\_asked\\_questions.htm](https://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/conditions/vision_and_eye_health/frequently_asked_questions.htm)

