

TRANSITIONS: PARENT TIPS

➤ CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS NEED TO PLAY AN ACTIVE ROLE IN MEETING THEIR HEALTH CARE NEEDS.

As a parent, your goal should be to work yourself out of a job as a direct care provider. While the emotionally supportive relationship continues, the adult child needs to manage his or her own life. Starting when your child is young can help make the transition easier.

Beginning when your child is in primary school (ages 6-11) can you do the following:

- a) Talk to your child about their chronic illness or disability so they are able to tell others about it.
- b) Teach your child any warning signs associated with their chronic illness or disability.
- c) While monitoring, teach your child about the medicine he/she takes.
- d) Teach your child specific self-care for his/her chronic illness or disability (e.g. proper rest and nutrition).
- e) Encourage your child to talk to his/her doctor and other health care providers and ask questions.

When your child is an adolescent (ages 12-18) you can do the following:

- a) Talk to your teen about his/her knowledge of their chronic illness or disability. Help him/her learn more about it.
- b) Teach your teen about what he/she might expect of their chronic illness or disability in the future.
- c) Encourage your teen to take on more healthcare responsibilities over time.
- d) Teach your teen to call the doctor if he/she experiences a warning sign associated with his/her chronic illness and to tell you about his/her concern.
- e) Encourage your teen to communicate directly with his/her health care providers and ask questions.
- f) Teach your teen to take his/her own medicine and to write down the names and dosages of medications he/she takes. Review these lists periodically with your teen.
- g) Encourage your teen to see his/her doctor while you wait outside in the waiting room.
- h) Teach your teen to manage specific self-care by himself/herself.
- i) Teach your teen to take his/her own temperature.
- j) Encourage your teen to go to a teen support group. Ask providers at local community agencies and hospitals for referrals.
- k) Encourage your teen to keep you informed about what he/she is doing and how he/she is feeling.

➤ **KEEP A JOURNAL OR LIFE RECORD OF THE MAJOR EVENTS IN YOUR CHILD'S LIFE.**

Review this journal and share it with your child during adolescence or at an age appropriate time. The journal should include:

- a) Health issues/problems
- b) Medical history (e.g., medical reports, doctor's letters)
- c) Family structure
- d) Therapy and service record (provider and type of service)
- e) Changes in function/ongoing concerns
- f) Medical supplies/equipment and vendors
- g) Insurance and financial information such as Supplemental Security Insurance (SSI), trust funds, etc.
- h) Assessments and formal reports such as:
 - ✓ Individualized Educational Programs (IEPs)
 - ✓ Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSPs)
 - ✓ Individualized Transitional Plans (ITPs)

Adapted from the Adolescent Health Transition Project, Center for Human Development and Disability, Washington.

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