



ABC's of the adolescent (12-18 years)

- AHA standard of 30:2 ratio of compressions to breaths.
- Airway/Breathing respiratory rates: 16–24/minute.
- Circulation: Heart rate: **60–90/minute** (getting closer to adult rates). (May be higher if adolescent is crying or febrile.)
 - Blood pressure: **96–126/50–81**. (BP will be elevated in heightened metabolic states.)

Physical characteristics

- Secondary sexual characteristics generally develop between 10–16 years; usually sooner for girls (10–12 years) than for boys (12–14 years).
- Second largest growth spurt for children. The dramatic changes can affect body image.

Safety

- May experiment with smoking, alcohol, and drugs.
- Essential to reinforce safety outside the hospital before discharge. This includes using helmets when biking and wearing seatbelts.
- Adolescents do not see primary providers as frequently as younger children. Remember that they might not get anticipatory guidance or screening for risky behaviors.

Social

- Beginning to back away from family and follow peer leaders.
- May become more confrontational with family and health care providers.
- May be sexually active.
- Fearful of pain and changes to body.
- Privacy is an important need during hospitalization.

Communication

- Give adolescents complete, respectful explanations about all aspects of hospitalization and procedures. Include the purpose, adverse effects, and any restrictions that apply.
- Include adolescents in decisions. “Assent” is developmentally appropriate consent from a minor.

Hospital considerations/family-centered care

- Create an age appropriate coping plan (level 10) with the patient and family.
- May become less interested in managing chronic conditions.
- Collaborate with the family to learn comfort measures that have worked well.
 - Adolescents may be willing to learn new techniques.
 - Advocate for adequate physical and emotional preparation before procedures.
 - Offer use of the treatment room in order to maintain safe havens (for example, the patient's room and playrooms) whenever possible.
- Important that you understand and pay attention to laws related to adolescent health care provisions.
- May be transitioning to adult care (transition ideally begins at approximately 14 years). Check with a social worker.