



Adolescent Privacy Policy

Adolescence presents the child, parent, and healthcare provider with many joys and challenges. Although they are not yet fully adults, teenagers are beginning to establish their own separate identity. During this time they begin to take gradually increasing control over and responsibility for their own lives. We want to help them learn how to make responsible choices about their health.

While most teenagers are generally healthy, they often have concerns that need advice and sometimes treatment. Sometimes they may not feel comfortable sharing these concerns with parents, teachers, or even peers. In surveys many say worries about confidentiality are a big reason why they may avoid seeking medical care or guidance.

At Wareham Pediatrics, we strive to provide the best possible care to our adolescent patients. In order to provide high quality care to your child, it is essential that they feel free to share any information with the expectation that it will be kept private. Thus we have developed the following principles in guiding our care of adolescent patients. These guidelines are in compliance with Massachusetts laws regarding the delivery of confidential care to adolescents and the policies of the *American Academy of Pediatrics*.

1. Starting at age 11 or 12, it is *up to the teenager* whether they want to have a parent in the medical exam room with them or not while they see us. Most providers we will decide to examine your child in private because we believe adolescents deserve a confidential physical exam of their genitalia once they begin puberty.
2. When we do see teenagers alone (or speak to them by telephone) information discussed is considered private and **confidential**. This means it will not be shared with others (including parents) without permission of the teenager.
3. We still need to talk with parents and at times it may be best to have this conversation without the teenager present. We will listen to what a parent has to tell us and we will try to reassure them about worries they have, answer general questions, or give advice. We will not disclose confidential information.
4. Often our discussions in private with adolescents are about things we feel should be shared with their parents and we will encourage the teen to share this information with you. If they do not agree, we may try to convince them by explaining our reasons, but ultimately we will respect their decision except in extreme circumstances.
5. In rare situations we may decide we have no choice but to break confidentiality. This will only be when we think someone is in imminent danger of severe harm and the only way for us to protect your child (or someone else) is to break confidentiality. If we are going to break confidentiality, we will make every effort to tell the teenager we are going to do so before we do, and look for alternative solutions.