



Teen Talk

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Center for Young Women's Health



Children's Hospital Boston

Newsletter Coordination & Layout
Amanda Kohn, BFA

Consulting Editors
Phaedra P. Thomas, RN, BSN
S. Jean Emans, MD

Written by
The Youth Advisors

Center for Young Women's Health
Children's Hospital Boston
333 Longwood Avenue, 5th Fl.
Boston, MA 02115 | 617-355-2994
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Dealing with a Learning Disability • Part 2

By Erica Cuevas and Emily Gallagher



In our summer edition of Teen Talk, we featured an article about teens dealing with learning disabilities. Due to the feedback and interest, we decided to offer "Part 2" to this

article, and talk with a "real" teen who has found positive ways to deal with her learning disabilities. Our new peer leader Emily is a teen who has learned to cope with having a diagnosis of both dyslexia and ADD (*Attention Deficit Disorder*). In the following interview, Emily offers personal insight into ways you can advocate for yourself at school.

Did you tell your teachers and coaches about your learning disability right away or if not, when?

Emily: "At the start of every school year I always notify my teachers and coaches about my learning disabilities. I make sure they are aware of the accommodations I am granted through my IEP* (*Individual Education Plan*). You don't have to do this in front of all your classmates. You can make an appointment to meet with your teachers and coaches, write them a letter or send an email. I usually either write them a letter or fill out the "Get to know you" card that usually gets passed around at the start of each school year. I make it a point to know what my IEP says and to speak up when my accommodations are not being met. I believe this is the most important thing I can do to succeed in school."

As a teen with a learning disability, do you do anything differently at school?

Emily: "Yes. For example, instead of having a "Study Hall", I go to the Resource Room in my school where I can work independently, but also have access to a teacher if I need help with anything. I also take all tests and quizzes including SAT and ACT in either a small group setting or in a private room, so I can focus all my attention on the task in front of me and not get distracted. Once in a while, I still find myself struggling with an assignment, but I have learned that it is totally worth using tools—it makes life so much easier. For me, these tools include my IEP, getting help from my tutor and from some of my teachers, and things that keep me organized such as flash cards and highlighters."

...continued on reverse

Emily's Health Tips



How to Lessen your Chances of Getting the H1N1 flu

Getting back into the swing of school is hard enough, but imagine catching a cold or the flu during the first semester of classes and suddenly finding yourself falling behind? Health care officials have been warning the public that this flu season could be pretty bad, especially with the H1N1 virus still circulating. Lessening your chances of getting the flu is possible if you know how it is spread.

The H1N1 flu virus is spread through contact with people who have it. The most common way to pick up flu germs is being near an infected person who is coughing or sneezing. When someone sneezes or coughs, germs travel at a surprisingly fast speed—up to 100 miles an hour. They also can linger for 2–8 hours on doorknobs and other objects. For example, if your classmate sneezed but covered his nose with his hands and then used the pencil sharpener, the germs once belonging to one of your classmates will now be shared with anyone else who needs to sharpen their pencil for the next few hours. Fortunately, there are things you can do to reduce your risk of getting the flu and missing school.

5 Simple Steps to Stay Flu-Free:

- Cover your mouth and nose when you sneeze or cough! Get into the habit of using a tissue and then throw it in the trash. Wash your hands afterwards.
- Wash your hands! This is the #1 way to avoid getting sick. Use soap and water and scrub your hands for at least 15–20 seconds, or as long as it takes for you to sing "Happy Birthday".
- Carry a small bottle of hand sanitizer in your backpack.
- Ask your health care provider about getting the flu vaccine. Some schools may offer the vaccine.
- Boost your immune system—You are much more likely to get sick if you are run down. Getting enough sleep and eating healthy foods help your body to fight off flu germs.

Remember, if you develop a sore throat, runny nose, cough, or fever, it is best to stay home from school and call your primary health care provider. ♥

* For more info on the H1N1 virus visit: youngwomenshealth.org/h1n1_flu.html



Erica's Corner

Preparing for BMI Testing at School

A recent study looked at the BMI (*Body Mass Index*) of teens (between 13–17) across the United States. Massachusetts ranked #30 for having the most teens between 13–17 years of age with a BMI that fell in the overweight or obese category. This news is worrisome because teens that are overweight are at a high risk for health problems such as high blood pressure and Type 2 diabetes. The Massachusetts Public Health Council responded to this information and passed new regulations to measure the BMI of students in certain grades and alert parents of the results. Beginning this fall, students in the first, fourth, seventh and tenth grades who attend Boston Public Schools will have their weight and height checked and their BMI calculated. This BMI report card will indicate whether the student is in the underweight, normal, overweight or obese category compared to other teens of the same age and gender. An explanation of what BMI means and tips on healthy eating and exercise will also be included with this information. Parents who do not want their child to receive a BMI screening can opt out by talking with their child's school administrator.

What should you expect if you're a teen in 7th or 10th grade in the Boston Public Schools?

- Your height and weight will be measured privately.
 - Your BMI is an estimate of body fat but doesn't take into consideration muscle weight.
 - If your BMI is not in the normal category, talk to your health care provider to learn ways to improve your health.
 - Review the BMI materials that you receive from school with your parent(s) or guardian.
- * You can read our guide to BMI & BMI report cards at: youngwomenshealth.org/bmi_teen.html ♥



On August 14th, the CYWH staff and Children's Hospital Executive Chef Jim Boyd teamed up to prepare and serve some of our favorite recipes from our "Quick and Easy Recipes for Teens" Cookbook! The Children's Hospital Cafeteria featured 6 delicious dishes, straight from the book.

For more info about the book and how to order, visit: youngwomenshealth.org/cookbook.html ♥

Dealing With a Learning Disability continued...

What is an IEP?

After a student is diagnosed with a learning disability, most public schools will assign a team of professionals who develop an Individualized Education Plan. The goal of the plan is to identify a student's learning challenges and create a plan to enhance learning so the student will succeed academically. The IEP may include accommodations such as time with a tutor, special learning equipment, extra time for test taking, audio books, computer learning programs, etc.

Finding out that you have a learning disability can be challenging especially if you don't know the resources that are available to you at school. Letting your teachers, coaches, and guidance counselor know about your disability is essential so you can get the resources you are entitled to. If you don't feel comfortable having a face to face discussion with your teachers or coaches about your special needs, you can always write a letter or email them. If you have a learning disability, you need to stand up for yourself—let teachers know about your learning disability and make sure that they provide you with all the tools that you need to succeed. You also need to become an advocate for yourself and be involved with your IEP. Know your accommodations and speak up if your needs are not being met.

Most teens who are diagnosed with a learning disability find creative ways to cope (*with their learning differences*) so they can do well at school, go to college and achieve their goals.

- * For more information about learning disabilities, visit: idanatl.org and idonline.org ♥

Ask Ty



Hey Ty, I want to get on birth control pills but I don't know how to go about it. Can you help me?

Great question. First, you'll need to make an appointment with your health care provider (HCP). This is necessary because you'll need a prescription, but more importantly your HCP must determine if oral contraceptive pills (OCP's) are a good option for you. Your HCP will check your blood pressure and weight, ask you about your personal and family medical history; whether you smoke, and if you use condoms. If there's no reason why you shouldn't take "the Pill", it is likely that you'll get a prescription the same day. If you have health insurance, you'll be responsible for the co-pay. If you don't have health insurance, Planned Parenthood and some community health or adolescent centers have low cost options. Target and Walmart have several pills available for lower cost. If you are a college student, check with your health center on campus to see if you can get your OCP's at a lower cost. One more thing, you'll need to follow-up with your HCP in about 3 months to get your blood pressure checked. If you do get a prescription from your HCP; before you leave the office, make sure that you know how to take your "Pill" and what to do if you miss any.

For more information about birth control pills, check out:

youngwomenshealth.org/femalehormone1.html ♥

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