

# Sexual Development Ages 18 and Over

Human development is a lifelong process of physical, behavioral, cognitive, and emotional growth and change. In the early stages of life from babyhood to childhood, childhood to adolescence, and adolescence to adulthood enormous changes take place. Throughout the process, each person develops attitudes and values that guide choices, relationships, and understanding.

Sexuality is also a lifelong process. Infants, children, teens, and adults are sexual beings. Just as it is important to enhance a young adult's physical, emotional, and cognitive growth, so it is important to lay foundations for his/her sexual growth. Adults have a responsibility to help young people understand and accept their evolving sexuality.

## Emotional Development

Most young adults aged 18 and over will:

- Move into adult relationships with their parents
- See the peer group as less important as a determinant of behavior
- Feel empathetic
- Have greater intimacy skills
- Complete their values framework
- Carry some feelings of invincibility
- Establish their body image

## Sexual Development

Most young adults aged 18 and over will:

- Enter into intimate sexual and emotional relationships
- Understand their own sexual orientation, although they may still experiment
- Understand sexuality as connected to commitment and planning for the future
- Shift their emphasis from self to others
- Experience more intense sexuality

## **What Families Need to Do to Raise Sexually Healthy Young Adults**

To help young adults ages 18 and over develop a healthy sexuality, families should:

- Keep the lines of communication open and accept that the person is an adult, not a child.
- Offer choices, acknowledge responsibilities, and avoid dictates.
- Continue to offer physical and emotional closeness, but respect their need for privacy and independence.
- Appreciate them for their strengths and qualities.
- Facilitates their access to sexual and reproductive health care.
- Continue offering guidance and sharing values

**For more information please contact The Clinic at 519-663-5446.**

### **References**

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*Last modified on: February 21, 2013*