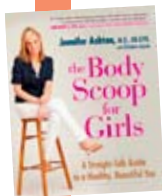


DANGER ZONE

Gyno 101

Teen girls may not need Pap tests until they're 21, but they still need to see a gynecologist yearly. Gynos don't just deal with STDs and pregnancies. "They specialize in women's health, so they can help girls cope with puberty issues, like body hair and breast growth," says Jennifer Ashton, M.D., an ob-gyn in Englewood, New Jersey, who sees mostly teens and is a mom of tweens. "Over 55% of my patients are not sexually active." Girls should change doctors between ages 13 and 15, ideally soon after they begin menstruating. Ask your daughter's pediatrician to refer you to a practice that welcomes teens.



MOM *Ashton*
Have a question about your daughter's health for Dr. Ashton? Post it at momster.com/bodyscoop. If she answers it, we'll send you her new book, *The Body Scoop for Girls* (Avery).

Also known as "black out," "pass out" and "space monkey," "the choking game"—when kids choke themselves and sometimes others for a brief high—is unfortunately still popular among tweens and teens. According to recent research, one in three eighth-graders knows someone who has tried it. Sarah Ramowski, policy and research specialist at Oregon Public Health Division in Portland and the study's lead author, suggests you ask your kid if she's ever played or heard of the game. (If she hasn't, explain what it is.) Highlight the dangers—including broken bones, brain damage and even death. Some signs that your kid may be participating are:

- ▶▶ Unexplained red spots, cuts or bruises on the neck
- ▶▶ Pinpoint-size tiny blood spots around the eyes
- ▶▶ Disorientation after spending time alone



HIT THE HAY Earlier bedtimes make for happier kids. A new study found that teens who go to sleep by 10 P.M. are less likely to become depressed than their peers who doze off at midnight or later. Those with healthier sleep habits are better able to cope with stress. To help your child wind down, dim the lights and shut off all electronics at 9:30 P.M.

Q&A

MY 10-YEAR-OLD'S TEETH LOOK YELLOW. IS IT OKAY FOR HIM TO USE A WHITENING PRODUCT?



Not yet. Wait until he has all his permanent teeth (usually around age 12). "Otherwise, when his new, adult teeth come in, they probably won't match his bleached baby teeth," says Kevin J. Donly, D.D.S., a dentist in San Antonio and a spokesperson for the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry. Once he has his second set of teeth, OTC strips are a good option, though it takes a few weeks to see results. Overnight trays and in-office procedures, while effective, are more expensive and typically not covered by insurance. Whichever technique you choose, have him brush with a desensitizing toothpaste for two weeks before, so his teeth won't sting or throb.

Tip: Stained teeth may be a sign of poor diet or, in rare cases, disease. So discuss the potential causes with your kid's dentist.

