



Youth Leadership Questions

What age should you start to plan for transition in health care?

Planning for transition in health care should be started as soon as possible. When you are told you have a chronic health problem or a disability and will need special health care, it is time to begin to think about the future. Ask yourself some questions? How will my health affect my plans for the future-what kind of job I will have, where I go to school, what kind of recreation I can participate in?

The most important questions should include *what do I need to know about my health so I can best take care of myself and manage my health so I can stay as healthy as possible and enjoy the things I want to do.*

Even as a young child, you can learn about your health and learn how to manage your health with the assistance of your family. Later when you are older, you can take charge of your health care needs.

Prepare for your doctor's appointments by writing down questions that are important to you. Be sure your doctor talks directly to you and answers your questions so you can understand the answers.

At around ages of 12 to 14, talk to your doctor about the age that you should be thinking about changing your care to a doctor who sees only adults. Often pediatricians, have a policy of transferring care by age 16. Many pediatricians also have exceptions to that policy when caring for youth with special health concerns. However, it is a good time to talk about any skills or information you might need to have a successful transition to an adult physician.

What are some steps in the transition process?

See *Tips for Transition* by the Youth Leadership Network. These are important steps to consider in transition. Begin by learning all you can about your health and about maintaining your health. What are the skills you need to have to be an informed health care consumer and when do you need to think about finding a doctor who will care for you as an adult. *(Make link to Youth Leadership hand-out. Tips for Transition)*

Why is it important to plan for transition?

It is important to plan for transition so you are prepared to manage your own health care or you can begin to identify supportive people who will assist you in caring for your health. There are many things you should know about your health as you become an adult and it is important to be prepared to speak for yourself, communicate your needs to your health care provider and problem solve any health problems that may come up for you. Planning ahead of time, learning what you need to do to stay healthy and having the health care provider and people to support you will make it much easier to transition to adulthood and a healthy life in the community.

Who can I talk to more about planning transition?

Talk with your doctor about planning for the future. Share what is important to you, what you want to do in the future, school, work and play. Ask about what you need to know to be an informed health care consumer. Talk with your family about taking more responsibility for your own health care. Ask them to support your efforts in learning all you can and talk about your future plans and how best to get their assistance in planning for the future and gaining the skills you need to manage your own health care.

Why do you need to change doctors?

If you presently see a pediatrician for your care, they are trained to care for children. When you become an adult, you will want to see someone who is trained to care for adults. Adults have different kinds of health issues and there are important preventative health care tests that adult doctors know about and are better able to monitor. The adult doctor or internist or Family Practice physician may not be as familiar as your pediatrician is about your special health care problem, but the pediatrician can work with your adult doctor to learn about your special health care needs and you also can help educate the adult doctor.