<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stages of Adolescent Development</th>
<th>Early Adolescence (Approximately 10-14 years of age)</th>
<th>Middle Adolescence (Approximately 15-16 years of age)</th>
<th>Late Adolescence (Approximately 17-21 years of age)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identity Development and Movement Toward Independence</td>
<td>Emerging identity shaped by in/external influences; moodiness; improved speech to express oneself; more likely to express feelings by action than by words (may be more true for males); close friendships gain importance; less attention shown to parents, with occasional rudeness; realization parents not perfect; identification of own faults; search for new people to love in addition to parents; tendency to return to childish behavior during times of stress; peer group influence on personal interests and clothing styles.</td>
<td>Self-involvement, alternating between unrealistically high expectations and worries about failure; complaints that parents interfere with independence; extremely concerned with appearance and body; feelings of strangeness about one’s self and body; lowered opinion of and withdrawal from parents; effort to make new friends; strong emphasis on the new peer group; periods of sadness as the psychological loss of parents takes place; examination of inner experiences, which may include writing a diary.</td>
<td>Firmer identity; ability to delay gratification; ability to think through ideas; ability to express ideas in words; more developed sense of humor; interests and emotions become more stable; ability to make independent decisions; ability to compromise; pride in one’s work; self reliance; greater concern for others.</td>
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<td>Future Interests and Cognitive Development</td>
<td>Increasing career interests; mostly interested in present and near future; greater ability to work.</td>
<td>Intellectual interests gain importance; some sexual and aggressive energies directed into creative and career interests; anxiety can emerge related to school and academic performance.</td>
<td>More defined work habits; higher level of concern for the future; thoughts about one’s role in life.</td>
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<td>Ethics and Self-Direction</td>
<td>Rule and limit testing; experimentation with cigarettes, marijuana, and alcohol; capacity for abstract thought.</td>
<td>Development of ideals and selection of role models; more consistent evidence of conscience; greater goal setting capacity; interest in moral reasoning.</td>
<td>Useful insight; focus on personal dignity and self-esteem; ability to set goals and follow through; acceptance of social institutions and cultural traditions; self-regulation of self esteem.</td>
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<td>Sexuality</td>
<td>Girls mature faster than boys; shyness, blushing, and modesty; more showing off; greater interest in privacy; experimentation with body (masturbation); worries about being normal.</td>
<td>Concerns about sexual attractiveness; frequently changing relationships; more clearly defined sexual orientation, with internal conflict often experienced by those who are not heterosexual; tenderness and fears shown toward opposite sex; feelings of love and passion.</td>
<td>Concerned with serious relationships; clear sexual identity; capacities for tender and sensual love.</td>
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<td>Physical Changes</td>
<td>Gains in height and weight; growth of pubic/underarm hair; increased perspiration, increased oil production of hair and skin. Girls: breast development and menstruation. Boys: growth of testicles and penis, nocturnal emissions (wet dreams), deepening of voice, facial hair.</td>
<td>Males show continued height and weight gains while female growth slows down (females grow only 1-2 inches after their first menstrual period).</td>
<td>Most young women are fully developed; young men continue to gain height, weight, muscle mass, body hair.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

This chart is adapted from the ACT for Youth Center of Excellence publication *Stages of Adolescent Development* by Sedra Spano: [http://www.actforyouth.net/documents/fACT%20Sheet05043.pdf](http://www.actforyouth.net/documents/fACT%20Sheet05043.pdf) (PDF: 538K)