



Q&A

My 15-year-old daughter is overweight and a sloppy dresser. How can I discuss this without wounding her? Why not try to catch your daughter looking attractive? Comment on her most appealing characteristics—her eyes or maybe the way she carries herself. Don't, however, use compliments as a way to control how she dresses. Adolescent girls are often self-conscious about their looks and sometimes hide their bodies in big, baggy clothes. Don't police your daughter's food intake either, but make an effort to role-model healthy eating habits. Be especially careful to praise her for accomplishments other than her appearance.

—Karen Friedman

Skin-Cancer Crisis

WHY YOU SHOULD SCREEN YOUR TEENS

MELANOMA IS SHARPLY ON THE RISE, especially among people in their 20s. As a result, doctors are now recommending that teenagers be screened for early signs of the disease, which if detected in its initial stage has an excellent cure rate.

A melanoma is a cancerous mole. "If you have a mole that has an irregular border, irregular pigmentation or a diameter larger than a quarter inch, you should have it checked by a doctor," says Manhattan dermatologist Pat Wexler, MD. Any hormonal change can stimulate mole growth, adds Dr. Wexler, so puberty and pregnancy are vulnerable times. However, the primary cause is excessive sun exposure. At

greatest risk are those with fair complexions who burn or blister easily, have blond or red hair and light eyes, and those under the age of 20 with more than 50 moles.

It may surprise parents to learn that melanoma strikes those who live indoor lives far more often than outdoor workers. This is because brief, intense bursts of sunlight—say, a ski holiday or four-day weekend at the ocean—are far more damaging than exposure to small amounts of sunlight every day.

In addition to an initial examination, Dr. Wexler recommends that when outdoors, teens apply a broad-spectrum sunscreen with SPF of at least 15 and wear sunglasses and a wide-brimmed hat.

DID YOU KNOW?

45%

of the semi-finalists for 1999's National Merit Scholarships were girls, up from 41.8% in 1996. This is the first class to take the revised test, modified to make it girl-friendly.

TOP: ERIN PATRICE O'BRIEN.

GET PERSONAL. Say hello to the kid-friendly and affordable \$200 Hello. With this personal digital assistant, kids can access their schedules and e-mails, use all their favorite corporate counterparts, cool extras for school include a calculator, a search and advanced voice recorder for on-the-spot reminders. (Tech: 1-877-883-2776, www.myhello.com)

