

Frequently Asked Questions

FAQ for Adolescent Well Visits and Forms

At Pediatric Associates of the Northwest (PANW), we want to help your healthy adolescent grow into a healthy adult. Your adolescent is approaching the age of informed consent as established by Oregon State Law. Once a minor reaches the age of informed consent, the minor is able to designate who has access to what medical information. Protected personal health information, which includes birth control, sexually transmitted infections/diseases, alcohol and drug use, and mental health cannot be released to a parent or guardian unless authorized by the patient.

We realize this is a big transition for many parents, and we want to help answer any questions you may have. We hope this FAQ page will answer some of those questions. Please contact us with any other questions or concerns.

The Visit

Q: What will be different about this visit than previous visits?

A: Adolescents will come to the exam room independently while their parent/guardian remains in the waiting room. This approach helps adolescents develop a unique relationship with their health care provider, promotes confidence, builds adolescent communication skills and improves their understanding of their own health.

Q: What will be discussed?

A: Our priority is discussing any concerns or questions your adolescent may have. In addition to general health topics, we will discuss emotional well-being, social connectedness, as well as safety and prevention regarding substance use, sexual health and injuries. We encourage you to talk with your adolescent prior to the visit about key questions or concerns you may have and remind them to discuss those topics with us. There will also be an opportunity for you to discuss these concerns as well at the end of the visit.

Q: What screening tools will my adolescent be asked to complete during the visit?

A: PANW uses multiple screening tools to help your adolescent's primary care provider (PCP) find possible areas of concern that may require more discussion. These screening tools include: the CRAFFT (a behavioral health screening tool focused on substance use), the PHQ (a depression screening tool), and the SCARED (a screening tool for anxiety). At age 14, SOGI (sexual orientation and gender identify) information will be collected.

Q: What will be involved in the physical exam?

A: The PCP will do a general exam and assess pubertal development. For women, a pelvic exam is routinely done starting at age 21, unless there is a specific concern. Anything required on the exam portion of a sports form is performed during a routine physical exam. Please bring your school or sport team paperwork to the appointment for completion.

Protected Health Information (PHI)

PHI includes sensitive subject matter such as mental health, drug and alcohol use, birth control and sexual health. In order to discuss PHI, consent is required from patients according to Oregon State Law.

Q: What is the age of informed consent in Oregon?

A: The age of informed consent in Oregon varies. Informed consent means the adolescent can independently consent to healthcare and become accountable for their own health care and information.

Age of Informed Consent in OR	
General health care	15
Birth control	Any age
STD testing, sexual health	14
Alcohol and chemical dependency	14
Mental health	14

Q: What is the Authorization to Discuss Protected Health Information form?

A: The adolescent (based on the age of informed consent defined by Oregon law) must be allowed the opportunity to object to the release of their PHI as well as consent to the release of their PHI. In order to do this the adolescent will be given a form to fill out and sign. This form allows the adolescent to decide what personal health information PANW is allowed to share and with whom. We will talk them through this form so they know what they are signing.

Q: What if I am not comfortable with my adolescent signing this form?

A: We understand this can be a difficult transition for both adolescents and their parents/guardians. You are encouraged to discuss your concerns with your adolescent directly. In addition, your PCP remains available to help. If you are struggling we have resources available to help you with this transition.

Q: Why was my patient portal access limited?

A: As patients reach the age of 14 years old, access to their health information via the portal will be limited to patient access only. We have put this limitation in place because of the responsibility we have to protect particular parts of adolescent health information and because our patient portal does not currently offer a way to limit viewable information based on the user. Please know, your access to the portal still has functionality after the 14 year old patient has been unlinked from your account. Parents and guardians can continue to access the portal with their own portal login, and the following activities will remain available to you: emailing providers and staff, sending attachments, requesting medication refills, and scheduling appointments.

The Information

Q: What if I have a question about my adolescent’s health?

A: You can reach out to your adolescent’s PCP anytime you have a concern. In preparation for the annual well visit please email or call your adolescent’s PCP about your concerns or questions at least 2-3 days prior to the appointment. Our goal is to discuss any issues with your adolescent during the visit and connect with you as well at the end of the visit.

Q: Will I be able to find out what was discussed during the visit?

A: Our goal is to help you and your adolescent have open communication. Navigating the complexities of adolescence usually works best if you, your adolescent, and their PCP are working as a team. We encourage adolescents to share as much as possible with their parent/guardian, however any sharing of specific information is based on your adolescent’s responses on the Authorization to Discuss Protected Health Information form.

Q: If my child shares they are involved in risky behavior will I be informed?

A: Most of what our PCP’s and behavioral health providers talk to your adolescent about is confidential, including many risky behaviors. However, there are ethical and legal limits to confidentiality regarding the safety of your adolescent. If your adolescent is thought to be a danger to him/her/them self, a danger to others, or if the PCP or behavioral health provider finds out that someone is possibly harming your adolescent in some way, they will notify you and they also have the authority to speak with others outside of PANW (if necessary).

We realize there are lots of changes during this transition to adolescence, but as the parent/guardian you will continue to play the most important role. To further help support you we have additional resources available on our website at <https://www.portlandpediatric.com/resources/>