

HYGIENIC NORMS OF BEHAVIOR IN TEENAGE YEARS⁹

Petya Krumova PhD

Department of Health Care

Trakia University, Medical college

Tel. +359 885164134

E-mail: p.g_78@abv.bg

Anushka Uzunova

Department of Health Care

Trakia University, Medical college

Tel. +359 899307657

E-mail: anu6ka70@abv.bg

Abstract: Teenage years is a transitional period in the maturation of the individual accompanied by numerous physical, cognitive, emotional and social changes. Maintaining personal hygiene and strengthening healthy habits have a long-lasting positive effect, both on the self-esteem of adolescents and on their social relationships. By realizing the importance of hygiene in all its forms, teenagers will be better prepared to face life's challenges and build sustainable habits that will accompany them into adulthood. There is a need to raise awareness of important health topics through the development of educational programs for both adolescents and their parents and teachers. They will prepare young people to face the challenges of the modern world. A key point in these educational programs is to create a safe and supportive environment in which young people can share their concerns and calmly ask the questions that concern them.

Key words: Teenagers, Hygiene, Eating habits, Leisure time, Risky behavior

INTRODUCTION

Teenage years is a transitional period in the maturation of the individual accompanied by numerous physical, cognitive, emotional and social changes. On the one hand, increasing decision-making autonomy and psycho-emotional maturation can have lasting effects on health status in adulthood (Mytton, O. et al. 2024), and on the other hand, risk-taking behavior and opposition to social norms are considered immutable in adolescents (Bradley, G., & Wildman, K. 2002). In this sense, hygienic norms of behavior have a defining role for the health and well-being of young people. Maintaining personal hygiene and strengthening healthy habits have a long-lasting positive effect, both on the self-esteem of adolescents and on their social relationships. By realizing the importance of hygiene in all its forms, teenagers will be better prepared to face life's challenges and build sustainable habits that will accompany them into adulthood.

EXPOSITION

An anonymous survey was conducted on a voluntary basis among 90 persons aged between 14-18 years, of which 45 were girls and 45 were boys. Respondents are evenly distributed, allowing comparison between genders. Their opinion was studied on questions concerning their personal hygiene, eating habits, how they spend their free time and the presence of possible risky behavior.

41 (91%) boys and 44 (97.8%) of the girls shared questions about general hygiene habits for daily bathing; brushing teeth - 32 (71.1%) boys and 38 (84.4%) girls; hand washing 21 boys (46.7%) and 19 (42.2%) girls, daily changing clothes 24 (53.3%) boys and 43 (74.4%) girls (Fig.1).

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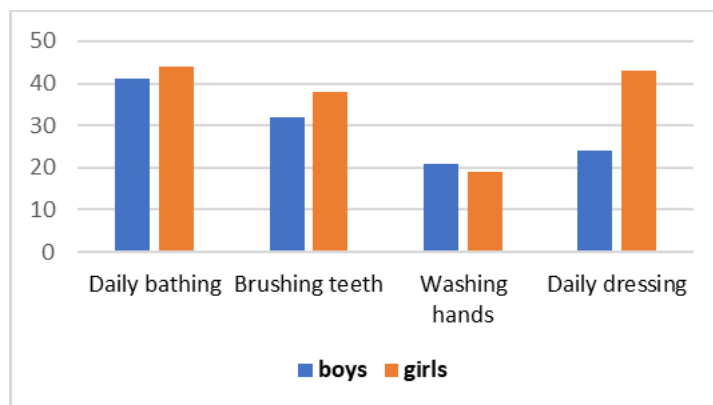


Figure 1. General hygiene habits

The study shows that girls generally take more care of their personal hygiene, especially in terms of brushing their teeth and changing their clothes daily. Hand washing appears to be a problem for both boys and girls, highlighting the need to raise awareness about the importance of this hygiene habit.

When asked about preferred foods: fruits and vegetables, 16 boys (35.6%) and 28 (62.2%) girls indicated; home-cooked food 24 (53.3%) boys and 26 (57.8%) girls; burgers and chips were indicated by 38 (84.4%) boys and 15 (33.3%) girls, and sweets by 45 (100%) boys and 41 (91.1%) girls (Fig. 2).

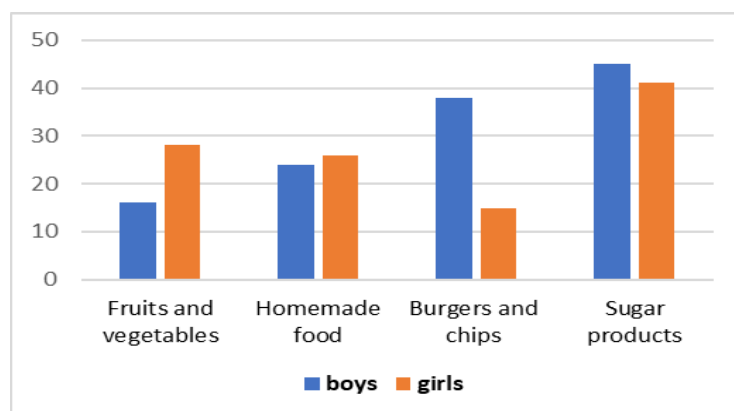


Figure 2. Eating habits

The study shows the difference in food preferences between boys and girls aged 14-18. Girls are more interested in healthy food (fruits, vegetables and home-cooked food), while boys prefer fast food, including burgers and chips. However, both groups show a high tendency to consume sugary products, i.e. there is a general trend among young people for increased sugar consumption.

Regarding free time, 19 (42%) of the boys prefer to play sports and only 7 (15.6%) of the girls, and 24 (53.3%) of the boys and 6 (13.3%) of the girls sit in front of the computer. For 31 (68.8%) of the girls, it is more pleasant to be out with friends, while only 9 (20%) of the boys share their opinion. The main preferences for spending free time are expressed in the use of a mobile phone 72 (80%) of all respondents, and for boys the percentage is 84.4% (32 of them). The general trend indicates that both sexes show a significant interest in communicating through digital technologies, but girls have a stronger emphasis on socialization (Fig.3).

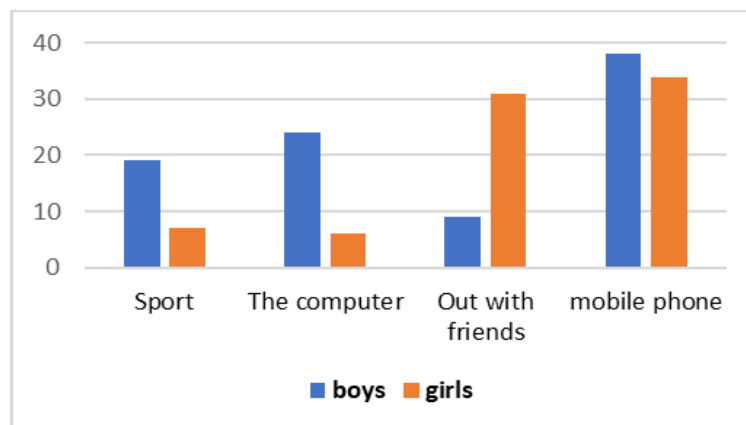


Figure 3. Spending of leisure time

Low self-esteem is cited as a leading cause of cell phone addiction and use as a primary means of communication. (You, Z. et al. 2019). This addiction very often manifests with psychological and adaptive problems - addictive behavior, loss of control, frequent mood swings, withdrawal or conflicts in the environment (Gong, L., & Liu, Q. (2023); Billieux, J. et al. (2015; Cholz, M. (2012).

About the use of tobacco products, 26 (57.8%) of the girls shared and 17 (37.8%) of the boys. Alcohol consumption was more pronounced among boys 21 (46.7%) compared to girls 11 (24.4%), while the use of opiates was shared by 12 (26.7%) of girls and 7 (15.6%) of the boys. An alarming fact is the higher percentage of sexual experience among girls 41 (91.1%), while for boys the relative share is significantly lower 11 (24.4%) of the respondents.

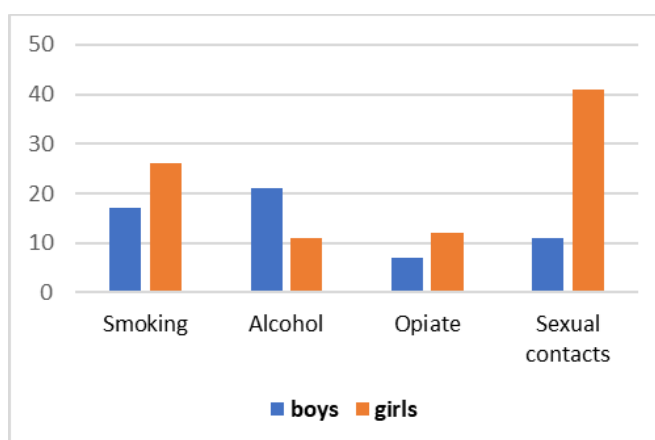


Figure 4. Risky social behavior

The use of tobacco products at an early age is dangerous for the health of adolescents, because the neurotoxic effect of cigarette smoke is most pronounced precisely in this period (DeBry, S. C., & Tiffany, S. T. (2008); Xing, S. et al. (2022) and is associated with an increase in the number of respiratory diseases. Another worrying fact is that the impact of cigarette use from early school age is not limited to this age period. (Bird, Y., & Staines-Orozco, H. (2016).

According to Kefeli, there is a statistically significant relationship between family characteristics - family structure, mother's and father's educational status, mother's professional commitment, monthly income, family relations and the risky health behavior of adolescents (Kefeli Çol, B., & Alta, B. (2021).

CONCLUSION

Adolescents often seek the approval of their peers, and this can affect various aspects of their lives such as healthy or unhealthy behavior - sports, nutrition, use of cigarettes and opiates, sexual contacts, hygiene habits and others can be influenced by general behavior in the teenage group. In

some cases, the desire to fit in with the group may lead them to adopt positive practices, such as active sports and healthy eating. Unfortunately, in other cases, social pressure can lead to the strengthening of harmful habits. Often times, ridicule or exclusion from a given group can lead to unhealthy habits - irrational eating, use of alcohol and opiates, etc.

There is a need to raise awareness of important health topics through the development of educational programs for both adolescents and their parents and teachers. They will prepare young people to face the challenges of the modern world. A key point in these educational programs is to create a safe and supportive environment in which young people can share their concerns and calmly ask the questions that concern them.

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