

# kids' health

BY JULIA TOLLIVER MARANAN



## Q&A MY 11-YEAR-OLD WANTS TO JOIN A GYM. ISN'T HE TOO YOUNG?

Not at all, says Jane E. Clark, Ph.D., a professor of kinesiology at the University of Maryland in College Park. "Many kids want to join gyms for healthy reasons—they want to be more active, that's where their friends spend their free time, or they didn't get picked for a school team and want to improve their skills." An 11-year-old can safely use most aerobic equipment, such as stationary bikes and treadmills, at the gym. "What you need to watch out for is a child who wants to bulk up," warns Dr. Clark. "That's simply not possible until puberty." But learning to weight-train at an early age (with light weights) can set the groundwork for a lifelong fitness skill. "Arrange for your son to meet with a trainer and build a program that's developmentally appropriate," Dr. Clark suggests.

## IS YOUR TEEN DRINKING?

**16%** of girls ages 13 to 15 consume alcohol when they're with friends, but only 5 percent of their mothers think they do, according to a survey from The Century Council in Washington, DC. By the ages of 16 to 18, 30 percent of girls drink with friends and only 9 percent of their mothers believe they do.

**65%** of teens say parents are "the leading influence not to drink." Yet 36 percent report that neither parent has talked to them about drinking. Help your teen stand up to peer pressure—brainstorm quick comebacks to why she's not interested in drinking or creative excuses to leave a place where everyone is imbibing.



**dieting don't**  
Children of weight-conscious moms are more likely to worry about being thin themselves, according to recent research from Children's Hospital in Boston. When talking with your kids about your diet or nutrition, emphasize health rather than weight loss, says study author Alison Field, Sc.D., an epidemiologist in the Division of Adolescent Medicine at Children's.

**water safety** Drowning claims almost 900 children's lives a year and is the second leading accident-related killer of kids up to age 14. Here's what you can do to prevent this tragedy. —Beverly Burmeier



PROBLEM	DANGER	SOLUTION
<b>lax supervision</b>	88 percent of victims are being watched—but not well enough.	Adults in charge should be experienced swimmers, watch the pool at all times and know CPR.
<b>inadequate layers of protection</b>	61 percent of pools and spas are not fenced in.	Fences should be at least 5 feet tall and have self-closing and locking gates.
<b>reliance on floating toys</b>	The belief that inner tubes, noodles and water wings are safety devices.	Always have a lifesaving ring, a phone and emergency numbers nearby.
<b>false sense of security</b>	Only half of kids wear personal flotation devices when on boats.	All aboard should wear vests snug enough that chin and ears can't slip through the neck hole.
<b>limited swimming ability</b>	39 percent of parents say their kids have never taken lessons.	Enroll your child in a swim program with Red Cross or YMCA certified instructors.