

TOP 5 HEALTH CONCERNS FOR TEENS RIGHT NOW

(AND WHAT PARENTS CAN ACTUALLY DO)

Tiny actions, big impact



THE PHUNCLE

**WELCOME
INSIDE THE
GUIDE**



Introduction: Why This Guide, Why Me?

Welcome to the PHuncle PHam!

I'm so glad you're here. I'm Dorian, aka **The PHuncle** (that's “*funkle*” because I teach about public health, “PH”, like a fun uncle would).

I'm a Public Health Educator and a National Board-Certified Health & Wellness Coach(NBC-HWC). *I tackle big problems for little people*, helping parents understand the bigger forces that shape kids' health today and teach them what they can *actually* do about it.

But let me be super clear up front: **I'm not a parenting expert.**

I'm not here to tell you how to raise your child. Honestly, who could?

I'm here to offer tools, ideas, and bite-sized actions you can take, drawn from the National Health Education Standards (NHES) that still move the needle. ***You get to choose what fits for your family.***

I spend time in schools, from big assemblies to small groups, talking and listening to teens and educators about what's really going on. I don't just pay attention to one child's experience. I'm trained to spot the patterns, the pressures, and the rising concerns showing up again and again across districts.

I help **caring but confused parents** get **prepared** in a digital world for the good of the children.



Concern #1: Body Image

1. What's the Topic?

How your teen thinks and feels about their body.

2. Why It's a Big Deal

Almost half of teens (46%) say social media makes them feel worse about how their body looks(The Digital Wellness Lab). This can lead to low self-esteem, social confidence, disordered eating behaviors, and worse mental health.

3. What You Might Not Know

This isn't just about girls. Body image concerns are rising fastest among boys and gender-diverse youth. And most won't talk about it unless *you* go first.

4. What to Say or Ask

“What do you think most people your age *think* a ‘good’ body looks like? Do you agree with that?”

5. Try This At-Home Activity: *Redefine Strong*

Ask yourself:

What's one thing I've said about my body this week?

Would I want my teen to copy that mindset?

Now write an empowering body-neutral phrase like:

“I'm thankful for what my body does.” or “My arms and/or legs help me get around every day.”

Post it somewhere visible. Invite your teen to do the same. Revisit these daily for a week and reflect on how you or your teen feel about body talk.

National Health Education Standard(NHES) 2: *Notice who or what is shaping health behaviors.*

Body Neutrality: *focusing on what your body can do, not how it looks.*



Concern #2: Nutrition

1. What's the Topic?

What and how your teen eats each day.

2. Why It's a Big Deal

Most teens don't eat enough fruits or vegetables.

Only **7%** get the recommended amount of fruit, and just **2%** get enough vegetables(YRBS).

Oh, and that's across *all* backgrounds by the way.

One more wild stat, about **2 out of 3** kids eat are **ultra-processed**.

Low fruit and vegetables + mostly ultra-processed food= double whammy.

What teens eat impacts their mood, energy, sleep, and long-term health.

3. What You Might Not Know

Teens notice what you eat more than what you say. If you eat even *one* veggie regularly, they're more likely to try it too.

4. What to Say or Ask

"If you had to pick a veggie that *doesn't* suck, what would it be?"

5. Try This At-Home Activity: Dinner Decoder

At your next meal, listen to how you talk about food.

Are you calling things "good" or "bad"?

If so, try asking this instead: "*How does that food make you feel after you eat it?*"

You'll learn more about how it impacts them, and it gives clues about future choices without shame.

National Health Education Standard(NHES) 1: *Learn what really helps (or harms) your health.*



Concern #3: Physical Activity

1. What's the Topic?

How often and why your teen moves their body.

2. Why It's a Big Deal

Only about **1 in 4 teens move for an hour a day**(YRBS).

Regular movement boosts focus, lowers stress, and supports mood, energy, mental and physical health.

3. What You Might Not Know

Movement doesn't have to mean sports or exercise.

Dance counts. Walking counts. Playing outside counts.

And the less pressure they feel to "do it right," the more likely they are to enjoy it.

Teen girls often move less as they grow up. Gym class, body image, and time make physical activity feel boring or stressful.

4. What to Say or Ask

"If you could move your body without it being a 'workout,' what would you do?"

5. Try This At-Home Activity: Movement Memory

- Reflect on what movement felt like for *you* as a teen.
- Were you forced into sports? Teased? Left out?
- What story are you carrying into your parenting?

Now ask:

What message about movement might I be passing down? Is it harmful or helpful?

National Health Education Standard(NHES) 1: *Learn what really helps (or harms) your health.*



Concern #4: Substance Use

1. What's the Topic?

Your teen's exposure to and thoughts about **vaping, weed, alcohol, and more..**

2. Why It's a Big Deal

More than a million high schoolers vape, and many start in middle school.

Nicotine hits a developing brain harder and faster than adults. It's easier to get addicted, and much harder to quit.

Even when teens want to stop, many say it feels impossible.

3. What You Might Not Know

Teens don't always see vaping as "real" nicotine use. Teens likely already have thoughts about substances, even if they've never tried them. They hear friends, see jokes online, and soak it all in.

If you don't bring it up, someone else already has.

4. What to Say or Ask

"Hey, I read something about teen vaping. What are your thoughts on vapes?"

"What do you think makes vaping seem normal to people your age?"

"Do you think most kids feel pressure to try it, or curiosity?"

5. Try This At-Home Activity: What Would You Say If...

Imagine your teen says: "Everyone vapes. It's not a big deal."

Write two replies:

- What your gut wants to say
- What a calm, curious version of you would say

National Health Education Standard(NHES) 5: *Build decision-making skills.*



Concern #5: Disconnection and Tech Overload

1. What's the Topic?

How your teen is feeling *connected* — or *alone* — in a digital world.

2. Why It's a Big Deal

Teens today are the loneliest age group on the planet. A WHO report shows **that 20.9%** of teens say they feel lonely on a regular basis, more than anyone else. Lonely teens perform worse in school and are at higher risk for mental health problems.

3. What You Might Not Know

Your teen might scroll because it comforts them; it *feels* safe. But over time, that swipe culture can lead to deeper loneliness, especially when online companionship replaces real connection. Many teens feel *less* seen the more they scroll. AI, filters, and comparison culture shape their self-worth in ways they may not notice.

The sneaky part is social media and AI chats might *feel like* a fix, but often they widen the gap instead of helping bridge it.

4. What to Say or Ask

“Who’s someone you actually feel safe talking to right now?”

“When you scroll for a while, does it help — or leave you feeling more alone?”

5. Try This At-Home Activity: Silent Scroll Audit

Tonight, notice one moment you reach for your phone out of habit.

Ask yourself:

👉 Was that a moment my teen might’ve needed a real connection?

👉 Could I pause the scroll — and lean into presence instead?

No guilt. Just awareness. You’re recreating connection.

National Health Education Standard(NHES) 1: *Learn what really helps (or harms) your health.*



**THANKS FOR
READING
HERE ARE
NEXT STEPS**



What's Next?

Pick your own adventure, parent!

I be yappin on TikTok, [you can follow me there.](#)

I'm slowly building my Instagram; [you can follow there. too.](#)

Or,

You can grab [The Teen Trap Map for only \\$7](#) (normally \$17)

***Here's to a future of protected, resilient, healthy youth
and to prepared parents in this digital age!***

