**Chapter 17– Emerging Adulthood: Biosocial Development**

**Emerging Adulthood**

The period between the ages of 18 and 25, which is now widely thought of as a separate developmental stage.

Growth and Strength

Strong and Active Bodies

Emerging adults are usually in good health.

Traditionally, ages 18 and 25 were a time for hard physical work and childbearing.

Physical work and parenthood are no longer expected of every young adult in the 21st century.

Because of food availability, most emerging adults have reached full height (girls usually by age 16, boys by age 18).

Muscle growth and fat accumulation continue into the early 20s, when women attain adult breast and hip size and men reach full shoulder width and upper-arm strength.

Death from disease almost never occurs during emerging adulthood.

Bodies Designed for Health

By age 20, the immune system is well-developed

Usually, blood pressure is normal, teeth develop no new cavities, heart rate is steady, the brain is fully grown, and lung capacity is as large as it will ever be.

**Senescence**

The process of aging, whereby the body becomes less strong and efficient.

Begins in late adolescence

Bodies in Balance

**Homeostasis**

The adjustment of all the body’s systems to keep physiological functions in a state of equilibrium.

As the body ages, it takes longer for these adjustments to occur, so it becomes harder for older bodies to adapt to stress.

Nutrition and exercise underlie health at every age.

Unused Potential

**Organ reserve**

The capacity of organs to allow the body to cope with stress, via extra, unused functioning ability.

Maximum strength potential

Begins to decline by age 25

Fifty-year-olds retain 90% of muscle reserve they had at age 20

Sexual Activity

The sexual-reproductive system is especially vigorous during emerging adulthood.

The sex drive is powerful, infertility is rare, orgasm is frequent, and birth is easy, with fewer complications in the early 20s than at any other time.

Sexual-reproductive characteristics are produced by sex hormones, which peak in both sexes at about age 20.

With frequent intercourse and without contraception, the average woman in her early 20s becomes pregnant within three months.

Globalization, advanced technology, and modern medicine have combined to produce effective contraception, available in almost every nation.

As fewer infants die, people no longer need to begin childbearing before age 20 or have four or more children simply to ensure that some children will survive.

Advances in contraception have reduced the birth rate and have also increased the rate of sexual activity, especially among unmarried adults.

Emotional Stress

One consequence of current sexual patterns may be emotional stress as relationships begin and end.

Attitudes about the purpose of sex (Laumann & Michael):

*Reproduction*

*Relationship*

*Recreation*

Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)

STIs have always been present but the rate has reached epidemic proportions due to sexual patterns.

Best way to prevent STIs is lifelong monogamy.

Worldwide, globalization fuels every contagious disease.

Exercise

Reduces blood pressure, strengthens the heart & lungs.

Makes depression, osteoporosis, heart disease, arthritis and some cancers less likely.

Those who are not fit during emerging adulthood are 4 times more likely to have diabetes and high blood pressure 15 years later.

Taking Risks

Emerging adulthood is marked by a greater willingness to take risks of all sorts, not just sexual ones.

Young adults enjoy danger, drive without seat belts, carry guns, try addictive drugs.

**Edgework**

Occupations, recreational activities, or other ventures that involve a degree of risk or danger.

The prospect of “living on the edge” makes edgework compelling to some individuals.

**Extreme sports**

Forms of recreation that include apparent risk of injury or death and that are attractive and thrilling as a result.

Drug Abuse

**Drug abuse**

The ingestion of a drug to the extent that it impairs the user’s biological or psychological well-being.

**Drug addiction**

A condition of drug dependence in which the absence of the given drug from the individual’s system produces a drive—physiological, biological, or both—to ingest more of the drug.

Drug Abuse

Drug abuse is particularly common among those who die violently.

In the U.S., between the ages of 15 and 25, almost 1 male in every 100 dies violently, through suicide, homicide, or a motor-vehicle accident.

About 4 times as many young men as young women commit suicide or die in motor-vehicle accidents, and 6 times as many are murdered.

A Way to Curb Alcohol Abuse in College

**Social norms approach**

A method of reducing risky behavior among emerging adults that is based on their desire to follow social norms.

This approach publicizes survey results to make emerging adults aware of the actual prevalence of various behaviors within their peer group.