The Life Cycle

Guide to Reading

- Building Vocabulary
  Look up the meaning of the word *toddle*. Write a sentence to explain why you think it is used to describe toddlers.
  - infancy (p. 389)
  - toddler (p. 389)
  - preschooler (p. 389)

- Focusing on the Main Ideas
  In this lesson, you will learn to
  - describe the stages of life.
  - identify the ways in which adolescence will prepare you for adulthood.
  - list ways to reduce stress in your life.

- Reading Strategy
  **Organizing Information** As you read this lesson, make a list of events that happen at different stages of the life cycle.

Quick Write

Describe a time that you or someone you know played with a baby or helped care for one. What could the baby do without your help? What did you have to help the baby do?

The Stages of Life

A fetus develops and changes over the nine months of pregnancy. It develops certain behaviors at different times. When the fetus is fully developed, the mother feels strong contractions. These help push the baby out of her body. After birth, the baby will continue to develop certain behaviors during different stages of life. These different stages that people go through in life are all part of the human life cycle.

- Babies learn to interact with their surrounding world. Why might it be important to provide infants with a variety of toys?
Infancy

Infancy is the first year of life after birth. At this time, a baby grows rapidly in weight and in size. In fact, the baby’s weight triples, and the size increases by half. Infants begin to observe the world around them. They do this by watching, touching, tasting, and listening. Soon, the baby learns to respond to those nearby. He or she may start to smile and make sounds. The baby learns to reach for objects and crawl.

By the end of infancy, babies can recognize some words and may even say a few of them. Within a year, they learn to sit up by themselves and can often pull themselves up into a standing position.

Childhood

Next, a child becomes a toddler. A toddler is a child between the ages of one and three. While toddlers continue to grow in weight and size, they don’t do so as rapidly as when they were infants. They learn to do many activities. They can feed themselves, scribble on paper, and use the toilet. Their language skills begin to develop, and they begin to talk to others. Also, they become very physically active. They can walk, run, and climb on their own. Toddlers are very curious, and they learn quickly.

The toddler soon becomes a preschooler, a child between ages three and five. Preschoolers begin to develop complex physical skills. For example, they can use a paintbrush, button their clothes, and ride a tricycle. Their mental skills develop, too, and they enjoy using their imagination. They like to pretend and to imitate others. Preschoolers learn how to follow rules and how to express their needs. They also start to make friends.

The period between ages 6 and 11 is called late childhood. In this period, physical growth continues, and children become stronger and more coordinated. They enter school and continue to develop their social skills. They make friends and participate in social activities. Overall, they learn to do many things on their own and need less and less adult supervision.

Adolescence

The next stage is called adolescence. This period, usually between the ages of 12 and 18, brings rapid growth and development. The many physical changes that occur help prepare the body for reproduction. The mental, emotional, and social changes help prepare a person for the challenges of adulthood.
As Amy gets older, she becomes more and more independent. **How do the things you learn as a child help prepare you for life as an adult?**

During adolescence, teens begin to take on more and more responsibilities in both their households and in their communities. Many of the choices they make will help shape the paths they take as adults.

**Adulthood**

At about age 19, the stage called young adulthood begins. At this time, physical growth slows significantly, but young adults continue to grow mentally, emotionally, and socially. Many young adults become independent. They often live on their own and begin their careers. Many develop deeper relationships with others, marry, and have children.

Then comes what is called middle age. Adults in their thirties, forties, and fifties continue to strengthen their careers, relationships, and families. During these years, most adults focus on their jobs and children. Some take classes to learn new skills.

After middle age, adults begin to show signs of physical aging. Some people in their mid-sixties and older may decide to retire. Despite showing signs of aging, many people continue to be very physically active, often long into their retirement years. They may travel, enjoy new hobbies, and become more involved in their communities. Americans are living longer than ever before. It was once a rarity to live beyond your nineties and now over 50 thousand Americans are older than 100 years of age.

In time, though, a person’s body systems begin to weaken, and he or she eventually dies. Death is the final part of the human life cycle. It is important to see dying as a natural part of the life cycle.

**Reading Check** Explain When can you see signs of an adult’s physical aging?
Health Skills Activity

Stress Management

Strategies for Reducing Stress
As you grow, you'll face new challenges at school, at work, at home, and with your social groups. While new classes, activities and sports at school, and making new friends can be exciting and fun, they can also bring on stress. Too much stress can harm your physical, mental/emotional, and social health. It can make it harder to make important decisions. To lead a healthy lifestyle, it's important to find ways to reduce the stress in your life.

On Your Own
Make a list of at least five stresses in your life. Identify which of these stresses, if any, can be avoided. Then make a list of at least five ways to relax. Think about how you can do some of these relaxing activities during your daily life.

Preparing for Adulthood

How are adolescence and adulthood connected? The physical, mental, emotional, and social growth you make during adolescence prepares you for adulthood. You learn to make important decisions that can affect your health. In fact, many of the decisions you make as an adolescent will affect you long into your adulthood.

Reducing Risk

Do you want to lead a long and healthy life? Then consider the consequences of your day-to-day actions. These guidelines can help you stay safe and healthy.

- **Protect yourself from injury.** Stay safe at home and at school. Always wear a safety belt when riding in a vehicle. Wear protective gear when participating in sports. Do the same if you ever have to work with dangerous chemicals or machines. Know how to protect yourself if there's a fire or other emergency.
- **Choose a healthy lifestyle.** Be sure to eat a nutritious diet. Get plenty of physical activity. Figure out the best way for you to manage stress, and get enough
sleep and rest. All of these things will reduce your risk of developing many diseases later in life, such as heart disease and cancer.

- **Don’t use drugs.** Be wise when it comes to using medicines. Stay drug free so you can protect your health. Do your best to avoid social situations in which drugs might be offered to you. Remember, drugs can permanently damage your body and mind.

- **Avoid tobacco and alcohol.** Smoking cigarettes, chewing tobacco, and inhaling secondhand tobacco smoke can cause many serious health problems, including cancer. Using alcohol can cause you to make poor decisions. It can also slow your reflexes. These effects can have many negative, even deadly, consequences. Continued use of alcohol can damage your liver and digestive system.

- **Avoid sexual activity.** By choosing to avoid sexual activity, you can prevent an unplanned pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV. These can damage your physical health and even cause death. Practicing abstinence from sexual activity will also protect you from the many negative emotional and social consequences associated with sexual activity.

▼ People develop strong relationships in adulthood. **What kind of social changes can happen to someone as he or she becomes an adult?**

**Reading Check**  
**Explain** How does practicing abstinence from sexual activity benefit your health?
Moving Toward the Future

The teen years are a time of growth and development—physically, mentally, emotionally, and socially. The experiences you have and the knowledge you gain as a teen will help you meet the challenges of adulthood. During adolescence, you explore who you are and find out what's important to you. You became more independent in your thoughts and feelings. As you discover how to solve problems and make important decisions, you will learn to take responsibility for your actions. You'll also learn how to accept your physical traits and develop confidence in your abilities. The teen years are a time to discover what makes you a unique individual.

During your teen years, your relationships with other people will mature, and you'll develop a greater interest in your community and the world. You'll also begin to make plans for what you want to do as an adult. An interest or hobby that you have now could develop into a rewarding career. So make the most of your teen years by caring for your personal health and preparing for your future.

Lesson 6 Review

After You Read

Review this lesson for new terms, major headings, and Reading Checks.

What I Learned

1. **Vocabulary** Define *infancy*, and use it in a sentence.

2. **List** Identify four choices you can make to reduce risk in your life.

3. **Give Examples** In what ways do your teen years prepare you for adult life?

4. **Explain** How does death relate to the human life cycle?

Thinking Critically

5. **Apply** Brent is feeling pressure to engage in sexual activity with his girlfriend. What would you say to Brent to encourage him to make the healthful choice of abstaining from sexual activity?

6. **Infer** How do a teen's responsibilities at school prepare him or her for adulthood?

Applying Health Skills

7. **Accessing Information** Make a list of three careers that might interest you. Do research to find out what kind of education, training, or experience you would need to have a job in each career. Then identify at least two activities you could do as a teen to prepare for each career.