YOUTH SPORTS
GROWTH, MATURATION AND TALENT

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CHAPTER 1: BASIC PRINCIPLES OF GROWTH AND MATURATION

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INTRODUCTION

The interval between birth and adulthood is commonly divided into age periods. The first year after birth (birth to the first birthday) is labeled infancy, which is followed by childhood. Childhood is usually subdivided into two phases, early and middle. The former approximates the “preschool” years, about 1 through 5 years of age. The latter approximates the “elementary school” years, about 5-6 through 10-11 years. The upper limit of middle childhood is arbitrary because it is followed by adolescence, which is variable in when it starts. Some fourth grade girls, for example, who are about 9-10 years of age, have already entered the early stages of adolescence. The termination of adolescence is also quite variable so that it is also difficult to specify when adulthood begins. Biologically, some girls are sexually mature by 12 years of age and some boys are sexually mature by 14 years of age; i.e., they are biologically adult. Yet, they are adolescents in the eyes of society. Adulthood is a socially defined concept, usually in the context of completing high school, and in some instances, completing college.

This chapter has several objectives:

- What are the basic principles of growth, maturation, and development?

- How do they interact during childhood and adolescence?

- What is the pattern of age changes and sex differences in growth, maturation, and development from childhood through adolescence?

- What is the pattern of change in the performance motor, strength and aerobic tasks from childhood through adolescence?