

Teen Food & Fitness

Healthy Ideas for Middle and High School Students

November 2009



FAST TAKES

Activities that stick

Is there an activity your teen enjoys that she can stick with as an adult? Dancing, yoga, biking, tennis, and swimming are all great for any age. Help her find fitness ideas that she really likes now, and she'll be more likely to stay active throughout life.

Healthy holidays



Many holiday foods are loaded with fat and sodium.

Encourage your child to fill his plate with the healthiest offerings (turkey, steamed vegetables). Then he can take smaller tastes of creamy casseroles or rich desserts. *Tip:* Be sure that he eats breakfast and lunch so he's not starving when it's time for the holiday dinner.

Did You Know?

Weight lifting is not just for bodybuilders! Your child can add muscle and increase her strength by lifting light weights. Suggest that she lift three- or five-pound weights for 20 minutes three times a week. She might do lunges, squats, or bicep curls.

Just for fun

Reporter: How long have you been running?

Track star: Since I was eight.

Reporter: You must be tired!



Rio Rancho Public Schools
Tonna Burgos, Executive Director of Student Services

Crucial calcium

Your child has a golden opportunity: he can build strong bones for life by getting enough calcium now. But studies show that teens eat fewer calcium-rich foods as they get older. Here's how your child can fit this important nutrient into his diet all day long.

Breakfast

Suggest that he start the day with fat-free milk—8 oz. has nearly a fourth of the 1,300 mg of calcium he needs daily. He can drink it plain, pour it over cold cereal, or use it to prepare oatmeal or cream of wheat. Or help him make smoothies with nonfat yogurt and fresh fruit. *Note:* Look for breakfast foods (orange juice, bread, cereals, waffles) that are fortified with calcium.

Lunch

Help your child keep the calcium going at midday. Encourage him to add milk to a school lunch and to choose calcium-rich items like low-fat pizza, a pita wrap with cheese, or cottage cheese and strawberries from the salad bar. If your teen packs a lunch, suggest that he buy milk at school to go along with it.

Weighty issues

Almost one-fifth of teens are overweight. If your child is one of them, help her with these ideas:

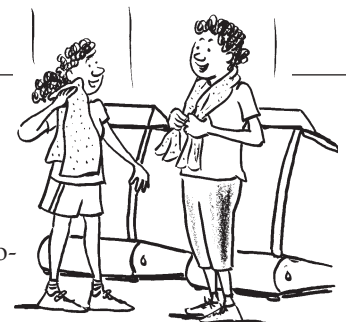
- Focus on health, not appearance. Explain to your teen that people have more energy and are less likely to develop medical problems when their weight is proportional to their height. Together, talk to her doctor for advice on achieving a healthier size.

- Be a role model. Don't weigh yourself every day, and encourage your child to avoid the habit, too. Let her know that if you eat right and exercise, you don't need a scale to tell you how you're doing. Also, don't complain about your own weight. Instead, talk about how great you feel after a walk or a workout.



Dinner

Add calcium with a main or side dish at dinnertime. You might thread shrimp onto skewers with bell pepper slices and pineapple chunks, and broil. Or make these easy salmon cakes: mash salmon (including bones) from 1 large can, and stir in ½ cup bread crumbs and 2 eggs. Form into patties, and bake at 350° for 15–20 minutes. For side dishes, try baked beans or green vegetables like broccoli, okra, peas, or collard or turnip greens.



Food allergies

For a teen with a food allergy, it may seem like there's no such thing as a casual meal or snack. But with these tips, your child will soon be a pro at handling her allergy.



Speak up. Help your child practice talking about her allergy. In a restaurant, she might say to a waiter, "I'm allergic to soy. What ingredients are in this dish?" When she passes up cake at a party, she can simply say, "No, thanks. I can't eat wheat."

Learn about ingredients. Teach your teen to spot allergens on food labels. If she has a milk allergy, the ingredients will include not only *milk* and *cream* but *casein* and *whey*. If she's allergic to eggs, she should watch for them in baked goods and breaded foods. When she's in doubt about an item, she shouldn't eat it.

Bring food along. Having a food allergy means planning ahead. If your teen is allergic to peanuts, she might take a box of popcorn to share at a sleepover. Encourage her to carry snacks in her backpack or purse when she goes out. That way, she'll always have something she can eat with confidence. ♥

Q & A Sports and energy drinks

Q: My son keeps asking me to buy sports and energy drinks. Do they have any benefits?

A: Sports and energy drinks are both popular with teens, but neither is necessary. Although sports drinks contain nutrients to replace those lost during exercise, they're also full of sugar, calories, and salt.



Unless your child has been exercising strenuously for more than an hour or working out in hot weather, water and a snack will be enough to recharge him.

Energy drinks usually contain high doses of caffeine—sometimes more than twice as much as coffee. They can cause a rapid heartbeat and make your teen jittery.

Instead of buying these drinks, get your son a reusable water bottle. He can refill it to stay hydrated all day—at no extra charge and with no sugar or caffeine! ♥

In the Kitchen

Fall for vegetables

Harvest a bounty of flavor with these recipes that will tempt any teen to eat his vegetables.

Roasted veggies

Slice 1 eggplant, 4 red potatoes, and 2 small onions. Place in a shallow, foil-lined baking dish. Sprinkle with 1 tsp. pepper and 1 tsp. rosemary, and drizzle 1 tbsp. olive oil on top. Roast at 400° until tender, about 45 minutes.

Stuffed squash

Cut 2 acorn squashes in half. Scoop out the seeds. Dice 1 apple and 1 celery stalk, and sauté with

1 tsp. canola oil.

Stir in 2 cups cooked brown rice, ¼ cup raisins, and ¼ cup apple cider. Spoon the stuffing into the squash halves, and bake at 350° for 1 hour.

Stir-fried medley

Snap the ends off 2 cups green beans. Slice 2 zucchini, 2 carrots, and 1 cup mushrooms. Stir-fry in 2 tbsp. olive oil and 1 tsp. teriyaki sauce. Serve over cooked noodles. ♥



ACTIVITY CORNER

Core fitness

Every move your teen makes starts in her "core"—the abdominal and back muscles that support her spine. Encourage her to do core strengthening exercises like these at least three times a week. The results? Good posture and a strong body.

Bent-knee crunches

Sit on the floor with your knees bent, feet flat, and arms straight out in front

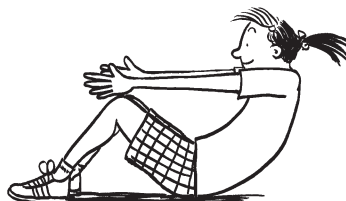
of you. Keeping your back rounded, slowly roll down from the bottom of your spine until your back is diagonal to the floor. Then, roll back up.

The plank

Facing the floor, balance on your forearms and toes. (You'll form a straight line from your head to your heels.) Hold for 30 seconds and repeat. Increase the time as you get stronger.

Hamstring stretch

Stand with your legs about two feet apart, arms out to the sides, and toes facing forward. With your back straight and stomach pulled in, bend forward from your hips until your back is parallel to the floor. Then, slowly straighten up. ♥



OUR PURPOSE

To provide busy parents with practical ways to promote healthy nutrition and physical activity for their children.

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540-636-4280 • rfeustomer@wolterskluwer.com
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