

Teen Food & Fitness

Healthy Ideas for Middle and High School Students

December 2015



FAST TAKES

Zucchini "spaghetti"

For a great alternative to regular pasta, try zucchini noodles. Cut zucchini into very thin, lengthwise slices with a knife, or use a vegetable peeler. Saute with a little olive oil, and serve as you would noodles. *Idea:* Try this with other vegetables, too, such as cucumbers or carrots.

Did You Know?

Store-bought smoothies are often full of added sugar and might not contain much real fruit.



Plus, if they don't have whole fruits, your child misses out on the fiber in the skin. *Tip:* Have your tween make smoothies at home instead. He could put in fruit slices (pears, peaches) with the peel intact or include dark, leafy greens like kale or spinach.

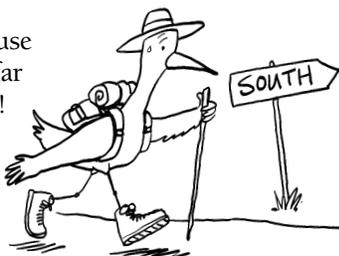
Mall workouts

Instead of spending money at the mall, encourage your teen to use it as a place for a convenient workout. Have her lace up her sneakers and head there with a friend. How many times can they make it around the loop in 30 minutes? *Note:* If there's no mall nearby, they could walk up and down a shopping strip.

Just for fun

Q: Why do birds fly south for the winter?

A: Because it's too far to walk!



Community service + fitness

Volunteering is a great way for your teen to serve others—and a good chance for her to get exercise, too. Use these ideas as a starting place.



Youth groups

Recreational sports leagues often need assistant coaches or helpers for practices, drills, and games. Even if your teenager didn't play the sport, she can still pitch in. The coaches will walk her through drills and other exercises to teach younger children.

Senior centers

Your child could help residents at senior centers get around by lending an arm or pushing a wheelchair. She might organize friends to go with her and even arrange activities like talent shows or a dance. *Tip:* Seniors living at home may need help, too. Encourage your child to reach out to neighbors and offer to run errands, fix things around the house, or clear snow-covered sidewalks.

Therapeutic stables, farms

Have your teenager check if there are nearby farms or stables that offer programs to help people with developmental or physical disabilities. These facilities often welcome volunteers to lead horses, walk beside riders, or care for animals by cleaning out stalls and filling water buckets. The farms can also use help maintaining buildings, fences, and gardens.

Note: Volunteer programs may have age requirements. When your child researches possibilities, she should ask. Also, her school counselor might have a list of organizations looking for volunteers her age. ♥

"Convenient" choices

It may not be easy, but your child *can* find nutritious food options on convenience store shelves—if he knows what to select. Share these suggestions:

- Look for diced fruit in prepared cups (choose ones packed in fruit juice, not syrup). Bananas and apples are often right on the checkout counter.
- While your teen could easily get shelled nuts, encourage him to go for pistachios or peanuts in the shell. The shells take time to open, meaning he'll be more likely to take his time eating the nuts—and eat fewer.
- String cheese, nonfat yogurt, and fat-free milk are all high in both calcium and protein, so they'll satisfy your teen's hunger.

Note: Water will always be a better choice than soda or a slushie drink. ♥



Healthy eating on a budget

Consider giving your child lessons in money smarts *and* nutrition by pointing out ways to eat well without breaking the bank.

Lesson #1: Buy in bulk. Foods in larger packages are usually cheaper. At home, your tween can help you package smaller containers of items like pork chops, dried beans, oats, or whole-wheat flour.

Lesson #2: Shop deals. Review weekly shopping flyers with your teen to pick out the best deals on fresh or canned produce,



multigrain pasta, fish, and other healthy ingredients. He could also look for apps that offer discounts on food items.

Lesson #3: Plan ahead. One of the best ways to keep your budget in check is to plan out meals. Brainstorm a week's worth of meals together, and have your child shop and prepare

meals with you. *Note:* Encourage him to use the bulk foods and deals he found in drawing up the weekly plan.

Lesson #4: Remember leftovers. Let your teen see how to add extras from dinner one day to stews, soups, sandwiches, and burritos the next. Post sticky notes listing leftovers on the outside of the fridge. Once someone uses up the leftover, toss the note. ♡

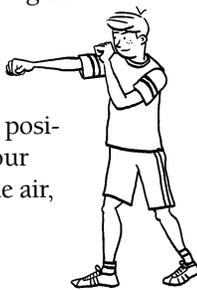
ACTIVITY CORNER

Boxing moves



Boxing gyms and classes have become popular lately. With these basic boxing drills, your teen can work up a sweat—no punching bag needed.

• **Jab.** Stand with legs apart, arms bent, and fists facing your face in a “guard” position. Quickly move your right arm, punch at the air, and return to the start position. Repeat 5–10 times on each side.



• **Bob and weave.** Bend at the knees in a squat with hands in the “guard” position. Come up on the right side by straightening your left leg—as if you’re dodging a punch to the left. Go into a squat again, and repeat on the other side. Try doing this for one minute. *Variation:* Throw in a jab each time you weave up.

• **Back kick.** Stand with feet hip-width apart, knees slightly bent, and fists up. Lift your right foot, and kick your leg straight back. Do up to 12 reps, and switch sides. ♡

PARENT TO PARENT

Talking about portions

I was surprised at the size of the bagel my daughter Lexi brought home as a snack from band practice—it was larger than her hand!

As we chatted about her day, I mentioned that bagels and many foods keep getting bigger. Together, we looked it up online. Turns out bagels were 3 inches in diameter and 140 calories 20 years ago. Today? Nearly 6 inches and 350 calories!

That led to a discussion of how we can use visual cues to find healthy portion sizes. For instance, a serving of rice should fit in a cupcake liner, while a serving of meat should be the size of a deck of cards and a serving of cheese cubes the size of three stacked dice. I’ll remind her about portion sizes from time to time, but I think she’s getting the idea. The next time she had a bagel from band practice, she saved half for later. ♡



In the Kitchen

Chili for dinner

A bowl of chili is the perfect meal on a cold winter day. Try these two simple versions.

Chicken

In a slow cooker, place 1.5 lbs. boneless, skinless chicken cut in bite-sized chunks. Sprinkle with $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. each garlic and onion powders, cumin, and oregano. Add 2 cans cannellini beans and 1 can pinto beans (15.5 oz. each, drained and rinsed), 1 16-oz. jar salsa verde, and 2 cups



low-sodium chicken broth. Cook on the high setting for 4 hours.

Black bean

Saute 1 large, diced onion in $\frac{1}{2}$ tbsp. olive oil until soft. Add 3 cans black beans (15 oz. each, 2 drained and 1 undrained), 14 oz. low-sodium vegetable broth, 2 cans diced tomatoes with green chiles (14.5 oz. each), 1 cup frozen corn, 4 tsp. chili powder, and 1 tsp. cumin. Heat at medium, and then simmer for 45–60 minutes. ♡

OUR PURPOSE

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

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