

# Teen Food & Fitness

Healthy Ideas for Middle and High School Students

December 2012



## FAST TAKES

### Real energy

Encourage your teen to avoid energy drinks. These beverages are high in caffeine, which can cause jitters, headaches, and even nausea. Instead of getting energy from a can, your child could eat protein-rich foods for a natural boost. He might try a handful of raw almonds or apples dipped in peanut butter, for example.

### Help out, work out



Your child can help others and stay fit at the same time. Suggest that she offer to shovel snow or walk dogs for older neighbors.

If she takes dance or karate at a studio or community center, she might volunteer to help with a class for younger children.

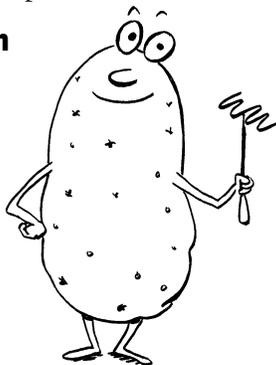
### Did You Know?

Tomatoes are a good source of lycopene, an antioxidant. To help your youngster get more of this nutrient, top sandwiches with tomato slices, or toss cherry tomatoes with skim mozzarella cheese and a drizzle of balsamic vinegar. Also, you can use tomato paste or canned, diced tomatoes when making sauces and soups.

### Just for fun

**Q:** How do you divide 6 potatoes among 15 people?

**A:** Mash them!



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## Healthy portions

A healthy diet isn't just about *what* you eat—it's also about *how much* you eat. Go over these tips with your child to help him figure out the right-size portions for foods.



**Check the label.** Have your teen read nutrition labels to find out how big portions should be. For instance, about 20 mini-pretzels equal one serving. Encourage him to put a helping on a plate instead of snacking from the bag—he will be less apt to overeat. *Idea:* Suggest that he write down portion sizes for his five favorite snacks and post the list on the refrigerator for easy reference.

**Estimate portions.** Your child can use measuring cups and spoons to learn what serving sizes look like. For example, have him scoop out  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup cooked pasta or rice or 1 tsp. butter. When measuring tools aren't available, he can remember

that  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup is about the size of his cupped hand, a serving of meat should be no bigger than his palm, and 1 tsp. is roughly equal to the tip of his thumb. With practice, dishing up appropriate helpings will become second nature.

**Swap plates.** Even a right-size portion can look small if it's on a regular plate! Try using smaller plates and bowls to make portions look more satisfying. If you're at a restaurant buffet, you could use salad or dessert plates for your meal—you'll take more reasonable portions. *Tip:* Consider letting your teen pick out new, smaller plates at the store. Inexpensive plates are often available in colorful designs. ♥

## Facts about fiber

Fiber has important benefits for now *and* later. It takes time to digest, making you feel fuller longer, and it helps prevent heart disease and diabetes. Here are ways to get more fiber into your teen's diet:

- Beans are high in fiber—1 cup of black beans has a whopping 15 grams. Try adding them to salads, or serve them over brown rice.
- Encourage your youngster to eat whole fruits, since much of the fiber is in the skin. For example, a whole apple has about 5 grams of fiber, while a helping of peeled apple slices has only about 2 grams. Smaller fruits (grapes, blueberries) usually have even more fiber per serving because a larger percentage is skin.
- Spinach has 7 grams of fiber per  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup, and other leafy greens aren't far behind. Chop up greens and mix into ground turkey when you make burgers or meatloaf.

*Tip:* Girls need 26 grams of fiber daily. Boys require more—31 grams for ages 9–13, and 38 grams for ages 14–18. ♥



# Active holidays

Help your kids find ways to stay active during winter vacation. Share these suggestions.

## On a long drive

- Before you leave, ask your teen to look over your route and locate a few places to stop along the way. He might see a state park or another scenic area where your family can take a walk.
- Keep a Frisbee or football in the car. Toss it around when you take a break at a rest area.



## While visiting relatives

- Ahead of time, your child can search online for events in the town you're traveling to. You could sign up for a holiday "fun run" or a charity bike ride.
- Ask relatives about places where everyone can be active, like a laser tag arena, a bowling alley, or an ice skating rink. Or check to see whether the local recreation center offers guest passes, and work out together. ●

## PARENT TO PARENT

### Skipping lunch?

My middle schooler, Sarah, recently mentioned that her friends skip lunch as a way of dieting. Although she said it in passing, I was afraid she might be thinking about trying the same thing.

I talked with Sarah about why it's important to eat regularly throughout the day. I explained that food gives her energy and provides nutrients she needs to grow. I also shared my own experience—when I had dieted in the past by skipping meals, I ended up eating more, not less, by the end of the day.

Even though Sarah seems to understand the importance of eating lunch, I sometimes give her gentle reminders. In the mornings, I mention interesting choices on the school lunch menu. And after school, I tell her what I ate and ask her what she had. ●

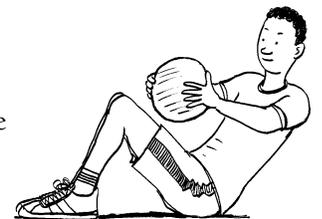


## ACTIVITY CORNER

### Break out the ball

A playground-style rubber ball is an inexpensive fitness tool. Find one about the size of a basketball for these moves.

**1.** Sit on the floor with your knees bent and heels on the ground, and lean backward slightly. With your arms straight, hold the ball above your knees and twist from side to side, touching the ball to the floor next to your knees each time. Work up to 20 repetitions. *Variation:* Do this exercise with your elbows bent, and put the ball closer to your hips.



**2.** On a kitchen chair, sit with your feet flat on the ground. Put the ball between your calves, and then hold onto the chair. Straighten your legs so that they're parallel to the floor, holding the ball above the ground. Squeeze for 5 seconds, holding the ball in place. Lower and repeat 10 times. ●

## In the Kitchen

### Jars of treats

This holiday season, suggest that your teens make "food jars" for a creative and inexpensive gift. These ideas can help them get started.

*Note:* Use a 24 oz. jar for each gift.

**Cinnamon pancakes.** Layers of color make this jar festive. Combine 1½ cups each white and whole-wheat flour, 3 tbsp. sugar, 2 tbsp. baking powder, 4 tsp. each cinnamon and flaxseed, and 1 tsp. nutmeg. Attach a note: "Stir together 1½ cups mix, ¾ cup milk, 1 egg, and 1½ tbsp. oil. To cook, put 3 tbsp. batter on a lightly oiled griddle."

**Popcorn snack.** Here's a tasty treat that a friend or relative can enjoy with a movie on a cold night. Mix together 1½ cups popped popcorn, ½ cup walnuts, ¼ cup dried banana chips, ¼ cup sunflower seeds, and ½ cup cranberries.

**Hot chocolate.** This gift is perfect for warming up after playing in the snow.

In a bowl, mix 3 cups nonfat powdered milk, ½ cup unsweetened cocoa powder, and ¾ cup sugar. Put in a jar, and attach a recipe card: "Add 8 oz. boiling water to ¼ cup hot chocolate mix." ●



## OUR PURPOSE

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

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Teen Food & Fitness™ is reviewed by a registered dietitian. Consult a physician before beginning any major change in diet or exercise.

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