

Teen FOOD & FITNESS

Healthy Ideas for Middle and High School Students

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Central Islip Union Free School District
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FAST TAKES



Party food



Every time your child goes to a party, she's likely to find salty snacks and sweets. Encourage her to come up with ways to avoid overdoing it. For example, she might fill up with a healthy snack and a tall glass of water before going out. Or she could decide ahead of time how many sweets she'll eat.

Interval walking

Walking can be more fun—and more of a workout—when your teen varies his pace. He can try interval training, where he alternates between walking at a regular pace and speed walking. Suggest that he walk normally for a block and then pick a marker up ahead (tree, stop sign) and walk faster until he gets there. He can repeat this several times.

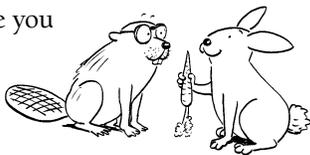
Did You Know?

Although quinoa looks like a grain, it's actually part of the plant family that contains spinach and beets. Quinoa is gaining popularity as a lower-calorie—and gluten-free—alternative to pasta and rice. And it is full of fiber and a good source of protein and minerals. For a tasty side dish, cook quinoa according to package directions, and toss with dried fruit, beans, diced vegetables, and nonfat yogurt.

Just for fun

Q: How do you know carrots are good for your eyes?

A: Because you never see a rabbit wearing glasses!

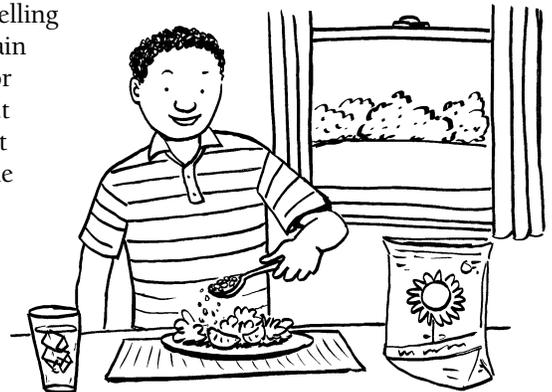


Add in nutrients

Do you find yourself regularly telling your child not to eat or drink certain things because they're not good for him? Instead, help him learn about nutrient-rich foods—the ones that he *should* eat because they pack the most nutritional punch. Try these strategies.

Empty vs. full. Ask your youngster to name “empty calorie” foods (those with lots of calories but little nutritional value). *Examples:* soda, candy, donuts, cookies. Then, have him Google “nutrient-rich foods” and write down 10–15 of them. He might list different fruits and vegetables, raw nuts, and whole grains.

Make a plan. Talk about ways to work in more nutrient-rich foods throughout the day. His goal could be to put at least one nutrient-rich food into each meal. For instance, he could have oatmeal made with fat-free milk for breakfast, a hard-boiled egg with lunch, and asparagus at dinner. Once he has achieved that goal, he could try for two nutrient-rich foods per meal (top oatmeal with almonds, put



his lunch sandwich on whole-wheat bread, eat a second vegetable with dinner).

Sprinkle them in. Encourage your teen to opt for nutrient-rich snacks and add-ins. He might munch on nuts or toss sunflower seeds into a salad, for example. Let him know that “eating in color” is a great way to load up on wholesome foods—if he varies the color of fruits and vegetables he eats, he will naturally get a good balance of nutrients. *Tip:* Many grocers and convenience stores now carry baby carrots, almonds, or dried fruits in snack packets. ♥

Power down

It's no secret that today's kids spend lots of time watching TV, playing video games, surfing online, and texting. Here are ideas for getting your teen off the couch and into some physical activity:

- Help her come up with a list of activities that don't involve a screen. Then, post it on the TV as a reminder that there are other things to do!
- Encourage your tween or teen to pursue interests that will help her stay active. Maybe she can join a recreational league or volunteer to play with the animals at a shelter.
- Keep TVs, laptops, and tablets in your family room, not your youngster's bedroom. That way, you'll be able to monitor her screen time, and she might be less interested in watching. ♥

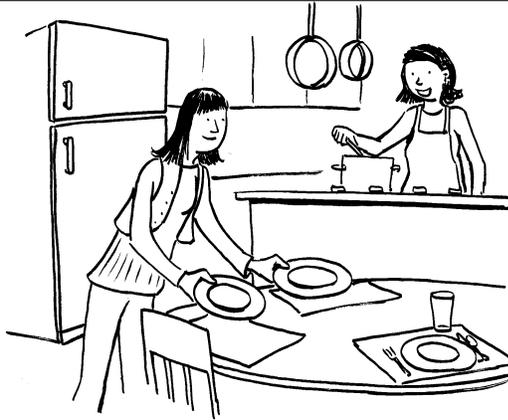


Eat together

Teens who eat with their family are more likely to do better in school *and* to be at a healthy weight. Encourage family meals with these tips.

Cook together

Look for ways to involve your child in some part of the meal preparation, whether it's chopping vegetables, setting the table, or even making the main dish. If she's helping



with the meal, she'll already be there for dinnertime!

Invite friends

Teens and tweens like spending time with their friends, so let them stay for dinner every so often. Your child might be more interested in eating with you if her friends are there, too. Plus, you'll get to know her peers better, and you might learn

more about your teen from their dinnertime conversations.

Be flexible

Supper doesn't need to be at the same time every night. Sit down with your family on Sundays to figure out which meal-times will work best that week. Don't limit family meals to dinner—you can pick weekday breakfasts or weekend brunch times, too. On days when you can't all be together, try to eat with as many family members as possible. ♥

PARENT TO PARENT

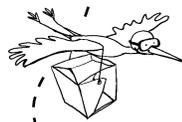
Athletes and eating disorders

I was shocked to read recently that many female college athletes have eating disorders—and that the problem usually starts when the girls are much younger. That got me worried about my daughter Jenna. She's a figure skater, and she constantly talks about dieting.

I looked up eating disorders and was happy to see that Jenna didn't show signs like skipping meals or heading for the bathroom after eating. And I found advice from young women who had suffered from these problems.



Based on their suggestions, I've begun talking with Jenna about the importance of eating enough to keep her body at "peak performance." I've also offered to help her plan out nutritious meals and snacks. I'm still watching Jenna's eating habits, but so far she seems to appreciate that I'm interested in helping her succeed on the ice. ♥



ACTIVITY CORNER

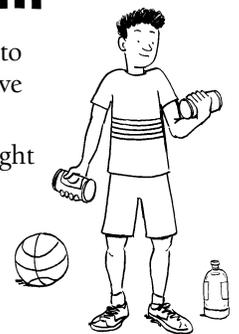
Create a home gym

Your teen doesn't have to go to a gym to work out. With a few inexpensive items you might already have on hand, he can make one at your house. Here's how.

Pick the space. Your child will need a place to exercise. He might choose a corner of his room or part of your basement as the "gym zone." *Tip:* Suggest that he put up encouraging quotes such as "If it doesn't challenge you, it doesn't change you."

Find weights. He can shop at yard sales or used sporting-goods stores for dumbbells in several weights. Or he can use soup cans, water bottles weighted down with coins, or heavy books.

Add equipment. A soccer ball or basketball can do double duty as a gym ball (strengthen arms by tossing the ball from chest height into the air and catching it). He might also stock a jump rope, a low step stool for "step workouts," and a beach towel as a mat for sit-ups and other floor exercises. ♥



In the Kitchen

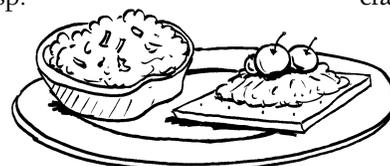
Healthy fruit "pies"

These tasty fruit "pies" are slim on calories and full on flavor.

Apple. Slice two apples in half, and remove the cores. Use a spoon to scoop out the insides, leaving a thin shell. Cut the leftover apple into pieces, and mix with $\frac{1}{2}$ cup chopped walnuts, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup sugar, 2 tsp. melted butter, $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. cinnamon, $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. vanilla, and 1 egg white. Place the apple shells on a baking sheet, and fill with the mixture. Bake at 350° for 40 minutes.

Banana. Using fat-free milk, prepare banana pudding following package directions. Then, put $\frac{1}{2}$ cup pudding in a cup. Add banana slices, fat-free whipped topping, and graham cracker crumbs.

Cherry. Spread $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. fat-free cream cheese on a whole-grain cracker. Top each cracker with 1 tsp. no-sugar-added cherry jam or fresh or frozen cherries (pitted, thawed). ♥



OUR PURPOSE

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

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