

Teen Food & Fitness

Healthy Ideas for Middle and High School Students

September 2012



FAST TAKES

Eat first

Encourage your child to have breakfast before school—at home or in the cafeteria. Eating breakfast lets her refuel so she can learn and stay active all day. Show her that you think breakfast is important, too, by eating with her or mentioning what you had for breakfast.

Happy active birthday

To help your teen get more exercise, consider a gift of physical activity for his next birthday. You could give him new sneakers, sports equipment like a football or Frisbee, or a gift certificate for an active-wear store. Or you could consider lessons in a sport or a physical activity like climbing or karate.



Did You Know?

Fruits and vegetables grown close to home can taste better. That's because they aren't picked too early, so they can ripen naturally. And being fresher can mean more nutrients, too. Take your teen with you to a local farm stand or farmers' market, or let her choose produce marked "locally grown" at your grocery store.

Just for fun

Q: Why did the cabbage win the race?

A: Because it was always a-head.



Central Islip Union Free School District
Lawrence S. Philips, Director of PE, Health & Athletics

Grab 'n' go

When teens are in a hurry—and they often are!—they may not give much thought to what they're eating. But many quick-fix processed foods like chips and microwavable meals are loaded with fat, salt, and calories. Help your child choose healthier meals and snacks with these ideas.

Make it whole

Buy breads made with whole grains and whole wheat. They're more filling and nutritious than breads made with white flour. For a simple snack, your teen could have:

- a whole-grain English muffin spread with 100% fruit jam
- a whole-wheat bagel topped with non-fat cream cheese and apple or pear slices

Make it vegetables

Have your child cut up vegetables and put them in plastic baggies. She could keep them in a drawer in the refrigerator so she can find them easily. For other quick snacks, she might try:

- celery stalks in a cup with peanut butter on the bottom for dipping



- bell pepper strips or carrots and lean deli slices (ham, turkey)

Make it a wrap

Together, make wraps and keep them in the refrigerator, "wrapped" in aluminum foil. Then, your youngster can grab one for an easy meal or snack on the run. Here are two ideas:

- leftover chicken on a whole-wheat tortilla with black beans (canned, drained and rinsed) and salsa
- hummus, shredded lettuce, and feta cheese on a pita

Healthy cafeteria meals

School lunches offer more variety than ever. With these tips, you can encourage your child to pick nutritious foods in the cafeteria line.

Think about options. Together, look at the school lunch menu (on a printed calendar or online) the night before, and put together a good-for-him meal. For example, he might nix the french fries and opt for brown rice. *Tip:* Lunch is a great time for getting in a serving of calcium—encourage him to have fat-free milk with his meal.

Load a salad. A salad bar is a smart choice, as long as your youngster chooses healthy mix-ins. You might suggest topping his greens with protein like a hard-boiled egg or grilled chicken strips. He can add in all the vegetables and fruits that he likes and top with a spoonful of nuts or sunflower seeds. *Note:* Caution him to stay away from mayonnaise-laden salads (potato or macaroni salad) and creamy dressings.



Support sports

Your encouragement can make a real difference in helping your teen participate in sports and stay active. Here are things you can do to show your support.

Consider ways to help. You could search out equipment swaps or take charge of ordering uniforms. You might also organize carpools or send out practice and game reminders to parents.



Cheer him on. Go to as many of your child's games as you can. Try to make specific comments so he knows you watched closely. Whether you're able to attend or not, tuck a short note in his backpack saying, "Good luck at your game today!"

Offer to practice with your teen. You can ask him to show you his drills and work on them together. You might retrieve balls so he can practice his outside

kick or throw a football back and forth. Or you could time him as he runs around the track. ♣



Q & A Concern over BMI

Q: My daughter figured out her BMI in health class, and now she's worried it's too high. What should I do?

A: First, make sure she realizes that a BMI (body mass index) isn't a real measurement of her body fat. It's a "guesstimate" and a good starting point for figuring out if someone is underweight, on target for her height, or overweight.



You can also explain that BMI doesn't take body frame into account, and it doesn't distinguish between fat and muscle. Also, it's not unusual for teens to gain weight rapidly during puberty.

Talk with your teen about positive things she's doing to be healthy, like drinking less soda and taking a Zumba class. Then, brainstorm other steps she could take. If your daughter is still concerned, she can talk to the school nurse, or you could make an appointment with her doctor for her. ♣

ACTIVITY CORNER

Time for fitness

If you schedule it, they'll do it! Try to make staying active a priority for everyone in your house with this plan:

1. As a family, decide on days and times to exercise. For example, everyone could agree to a Saturday afternoon game of badminton or basketball. Or you might take a nightly walk or bike ride after dinner.
2. Pencil in the activities on your kitchen calendar. Writing down family fitness time just as you would other commitments will make it more likely to happen. *Idea:* If you have smartphones, you can set up electronic reminders.
3. Create a family fitness bag. Stash balls, a Frisbee, a jump rope, weights, or other equipment in a handy location. When it's time to exercise, you'll be ready. ♣



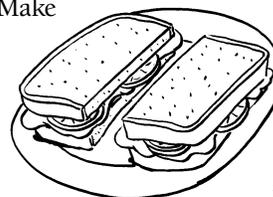
In the Kitchen

Healthier grilled cheese

Who doesn't like grilled cheese? Up the nutritional value and lower the fat using these suggestions.

Replace butter with spray. Instead of spreading butter on the bread, spritz butter-flavored cooking spray into a heated skillet.

Use healthier bread. Make your sandwich with multigrain, whole-wheat, or white whole-wheat bread. If your child is not used to whole-grain bread, you could try one



piece of white and one whole-wheat. Or make an open-faced sandwich with one slice of white bread (cook on one side only).

Try shredded cheese. While cheese is a good source of calcium and protein, it is high in fat. Opt for a thin layer of low-fat shredded cheddar cheese rather than full-fat American cheese slices.

Add vegetables. Chop left-over cooked vegetables (broccoli, zucchini) and toss with the shredded cheese before grilling. Or put sliced tomato into the sandwich before grilling. ♣

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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