

Teen Food & Fitness

Healthy Ideas for Middle and High School Students

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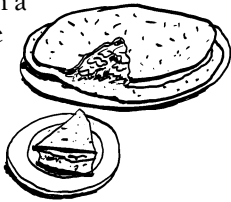
Washington County Virginia Public Schools
Ms. Francine Ivery, Manager School Nutrition

FAST TAKES



Fusion fare

Encourage your teen to try “fusion” cooking by blending her favorite cuisines in a healthy way. If she loves Italian and Mexican food, she could put pizza toppings between two whole-grain tortillas for a personal pizzadilla! What other nutritious combinations can she discover?



Friendly competition

Play an energetic family game of Up and Down. Place plastic or paper cups all over the house, half right-side up and half upside down. One team is “up,” and the other is “down.” At “go,” race to flip the cups to your team’s direction. Play a short song or set a timer to signal when to stop. Then, count your cups. The team with the most wins.

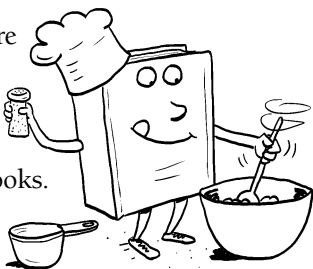
Did You Know?

Your teen or tween eats can affect his memory and ability to focus—two key ingredients for school success. Help him fuel his mind by following a balanced diet. Offer brain-boosting foods like eggs, walnuts, oatmeal and other whole grains, berries, and plenty of vegetables. His brain and body will thank you!

Just for fun

Q: What are the most delicious books?

A: Cookbooks.



Get outside and play!

Warmer weather makes now the perfect time to enjoy exercising outdoors. Share these ideas with your teen or tween to turn his childhood favorites into active play in the open air:



● **Field Day**-inspired fun will be a group hit. Have your child and some friends set up their own events in a backyard or at a park. They could do a 50-yard dash and a long jump, arrange an obstacle course, or even organize wheelbarrow or sack relay races. *Tip:* Suggest that they hand out awards and make it a monthly event through the spring and summer.

● **Playgrounds** aren’t just for little kids. Your teenager can use the equipment like he’s at a gym. He might do pull-ups on the monkey bars or incline push-ups on a bench (feet on the ground, hands on

the bench). *Idea:* Next time he’s at a gym, ask him to notice anything that he may be able to do outside on playground equipment.

● **Kite flying** on a windy day helps your youngster get his heart pumping. With the running required to get a kite up and keep it flying, the activity is an excellent cardio workout and can also help with balance. *Bonus:* Kite flying is relaxing—relieving stress along with providing exercise. ●

Food allergies on the road

If your child has food allergies, she may feel like there’s no such thing as a casual meal or snack. Here are tips to help her handle her allergy—and feel more comfortable—when she’s out and about.

Speak up. Encourage your teenager to be up front about her allergy. In a restaurant, she should tell the waiter, “I’m allergic to soy. What ingredients are in this dish?” If she declines ice cream at a party, she can simply say, “No, thanks. I can’t eat dairy, but I’m enjoying this frozen fruit pop!”

Be prepared. Suggest that your teen plan ahead if she’s staying overnight at a friend’s or going on a trip. She should make sure to pack her allergy medications and keep them close at hand. Then, she can take along safe snacks so she won’t feel left out when others are eating. ●



Portion check

Today's large portion sizes make it easy to overeat. Your youngster can bring her servings under control with these suggestions.

Estimate amounts. Let your child use measuring cups and spoons to learn what healthy servings look like. For example, have her scoop out $\frac{1}{2}$ cup cooked rice or measure 1 tsp. butter. When measuring tools aren't available, she might remember that $\frac{1}{2}$ cup is about the size of her cupped hand and 1 tsp. is roughly equal to the tip of her thumb. With practice,



Encourage her to write down portion sizes for her favorite foods and post the list on the refrigerator or keep it in her phone for easy reference. ●

dishing up appropriate helpings will become second nature.

Read the label. Sometimes food and beverages are packaged in what looks like a single serving. Suggest that your teen read the nutrition labels to see how many servings are really in the package. Then, she should try to stick to one serving rather than eating or drinking the whole thing. *Idea:*

PARENT TO PARENT Breaking bad habits

I've always been a nighttime eater—even when I'm not hungry, I still snack. Recently I noticed my son Joe was picking up my bad habit and eating along with me. I mentioned that I wanted to curb my snacking habit and asked if he would join me and help me be accountable. He agreed, and together we came up with ideas.

Joe and I decided to stop zoning out in front of the TV every night, since that's when we tend to snack. Instead we play games, do puzzles, or read. We've also started taking night walks when the weather is nice. And now that summer is around the corner, we use some evenings to plan day trips to nature trails and other places where we can be active.

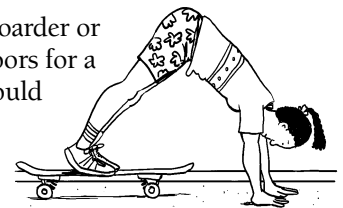
Staying busy in the evenings keeps our mind off snacking—and we're enjoying getting healthier together. ●



ACTIVITY CORNER

Skateboard workout

Whether your child is a skateboarder or not, she can use a skateboard indoors for a new way to "get rolling." *Safety note:* These moves should be done on a carpeted area.



1. Roll up. Get into a push-up position with your hands on the floor, shoulder-width apart, and the balls of your feet on the skateboard (which is pointing forward). Keeping your legs straight, roll your board toward you, and pull your hips toward the sky. Return to the starting position and repeat, rolling the board forward and back.

2. Roll forward. Hold on to the back of a chair with one hand. With one foot on the carpet and the other on a skateboard, slowly extend the foot with the board into a forward lunge. Return to start, and repeat for 30–45 seconds. Then, switch legs.

3. Roll out. Kneel down with the skateboard facing forward in front of you. Grab the sides of the board. Slowly roll the skateboard away from you, keeping your back as flat as possible. Then, return the board to the starting position to finish the move. ●

In the Kitchen

Meals on a stick

Food on a stick is always fun! Try these easy recipes.

Blueberry banana waffles

Toast 4 whole-grain frozen waffles. Cut into wedges. Thread the wedges onto a wooden skewer, along with fresh blueberries and banana slices. Use maple syrup as a dip, if desired.

Turkey sandwich

Let your teen "deconstruct" his favorite sandwich by putting its different parts on a skewer. For instance, he might cut bread into

squares and then add rolled turkey slices, grape tomatoes, chunks of lettuce, and cubes of Swiss cheese. He can dip it into mustard as he eats.

Pineapple chicken

Cut 2 chicken breasts into cubes. Alternate with chunks of pineapple, red onion, and bell pepper. Marinate the skewers in 1 cup low-sodium teriyaki sauce for at least 30 minutes. Grill or bake at 375° for 20 minutes or until the chicken is cooked through. Serve over steamed brown rice. ●



OUR PURPOSE

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

Resources for Educators,
a division of CCH Incorporated
128 N. Royal Avenue • Front Royal, VA 22630
800-394-5052 • rfeustomer@wolterskluwer.com
www.rfeonline.com

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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