

Teen Food & Fitness

Healthy Ideas for Middle and High School Students

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Washington County Virginia Public Schools
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FAST TAKES

Heart month

Give every heart in your household a workout during American Heart Month. Bundle up and go for a winter run. Or hold a friendly snowball fight in your yard. When vigorous exercise becomes a family habit, everyone's heart health will improve.

Game-day treats

Make Super Bowl Sunday super healthy with these teen-friendly ideas. Suggest that your teenager make mini pizzas, using zucchini slices for the "crust." Just top with marinara sauce and mozzarella cheese, and broil until the cheese bubbles. Instead of serving chips, he might sprinkle jicama sticks with lime juice and chili powder.



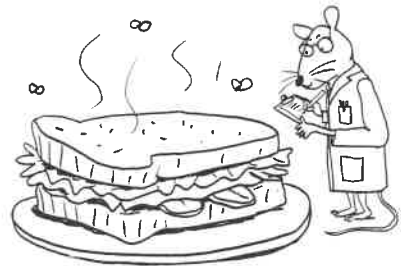
Did You Know?

Swapping nonfat Greek yogurt for sour cream is a tasty way to eat more protein and less fat. Your tween could add a teaspoonful to tacos or whisk it into a ranch dressing recipe. Maybe she'll even layer Greek yogurt with refried beans, guacamole, salsa, cheese, lettuce, and tomatoes for a seven-layer dip!

Just for fun

Q: What do you call a week-old sandwich?

A: A science experiment.



Active and screen free

Cutting back on screen time can motivate your tween or teen to get more physical activity and maintain a healthy weight. Here are ways to set screen time limits for the whole family.

Hold a family meeting

Discuss ways to reduce screen time, and draw up a contract for everyone to sign. For example, "Silence and put away devices during meals." You'll pay more attention to your food, making you less likely to overeat. Or help everyone sleep better—which lowers the risk of obesity—by pledging to turn off devices an hour before bedtime.

Choose to move

Brainstorm active alternatives to screen time. Instead of playing soccer or tennis video games, your tween could play actual soccer or tennis with friends. Rather than a family movie night, go to open gym night at your local rec center or take a free yoga class at the library.



Idea: Write down screen-free ideas and keep the list handy so you always have options.

Be a role model

Your teen will be more likely to adopt healthy habits if he sees you doing so, too. Make a point of closing your laptop and going for a walk. Ask your child to join you, and leave your phones at home. Or you might say, "I really want to see the next episode of my show. I'm going to save it to watch while I'm on the treadmill tomorrow."

What's that ingredient?

When choosing packaged foods, it's usually best to select ones with a short list of recognizable ingredients. But some unfamiliar-sounding ingredients are actually good for your teen! Share this advice to expand her food-label vocabulary.



● **Ascorbic acid** is another name for vitamin C, which supports your child's immune system. Encourage her to look for breakfast cereals that are fortified with ascorbic acid.

● **Lactobacillus acidophilus** is the good bacteria in yogurt that helps to promote healthy digestion. Have your teen choose yogurt with "live and active cultures." Products like squeezable yogurt, bottled yogurt smoothies, and yogurt-covered pretzels and raisins may not contain these cultures.

Winning nutrition for young athletes

To fuel up and play her best, it's important for your athlete to consume the right foods and drinks at the right times. Consider this game plan.

Meals and snacks. Have your child eat a meal 2–3 hours before a practice or game, a snack when it's over, and a meal within 2 hours afterward. Protein builds and repairs muscles, while carbohydrates provide energy, so her meals should include both. For example, she might have an apple and a turkey and cheese sandwich on whole-grain bread. Or she could eat baked salmon, brown rice, and a green vegetable.



Drinks. Water is usually the best choice to stay hydrated before, during, and after exercise. Encourage your tween or teen to take a water bottle to practice and games and to drink when she feels thirsty. Also, while

low-fat chocolate milk may sound like a treat, it happens to contain the ideal protein-carb ratio for athletes, so she might drink a glass after a workout. Explain that she doesn't need sports drinks—which are typically filled with sugar—unless she exercises vigorously for more than an hour. ●

ACTIVITY CORNER



Cool-down stretches

Post-workout stretching can help your teenager maintain his flexibility and range of motion—and prevent injury. Suggest these two stretches.

1. Shoulder stretch. Reach your left arm across your chest, keeping it parallel to the floor. Hold it in the crook of your right elbow, and stretch. Repeat with the other arm. Hold for 30 seconds on each side.



2. Hamstring stretch. Sitting on the floor, extend your right leg straight out in front. Bend your left leg to place the sole of your left foot on your right inner thigh. Lean forward to feel the stretch in the back of your extended thigh, and hold for 30 seconds. Repeat with the other leg. ●

PARENT TO PARENT

Freeze and save

With three growing teens, I needed to stretch my food budget. One strategy I discovered was to make better use of the freezer by buying food in bulk and stocking up.

At the grocery store, I look for value packs of meat like chicken breasts and lean ground beef. The kids and I place individual portions into bags, label and date them, and put them in the freezer. I also buy bulk quantities of vegetables that are in season. When green peppers were on sale, for example, I bought a few pounds, and my teens helped me chop them and put them in bags to freeze. Now it's easy to add them to scrambled eggs, fajitas, and casseroles.

To remember what's in the freezer, we keep a list on the refrigerator. Then, we consult the list before we go shopping to make sure we don't waste money buying something we already have on hand. ●



In the Kitchen Fiber-ful snacks

How can your teens get the 25–31 grams of fiber they need a day? Snacks like these can help—each contains a rich source of fiber.

Artichoke salad

Drain 1 6-oz. can artichoke hearts. Cut the hearts in half, and mix with 1 tbsp. crumbled feta cheese, 1 tsp. lemon juice, and pepper to taste.

Roasted chickpeas

Preheat oven to 375°. Drain and rinse 1 15-oz. can chickpeas, and pat dry with a clean towel. In a bowl, whisk 1 tbsp. olive oil, 1/2 tsp. minced garlic, 1/4 tsp. pepper, and a

pinch of salt. Add the chickpeas, and toss to coat. Cook in a single layer on a baking sheet for about 50 minutes, until golden brown and crisp.

Crunchy bananas

In a small bowl, microwave 2 tbsp. nut or seed butter about 10 seconds to soften. In a second bowl, combine 1 tbsp. rolled oats and 1 tsp. coconut flakes.

Break a peeled banana in half. Roll in the nut butter, then in the oat mixture.

Note: Fresh fruits and vegetables, nuts, legumes, and whole grains are all good sources of fiber. ●



OUR PURPOSE

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

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