

Teen Food & Fitness

Healthy Ideas for Middle and High School Students

September 2018

FAST TAKES



Concussions: Know the signs

Tweens and teens who play a contact sport like football, ice hockey, or soccer are at risk for concussions. Symptoms, including headache, nausea, dizziness, and sensitivity to light, don't always show up right away. That means your athlete should tell an adult immediately after any blow to the head so he can be tested for a concussion.

Did You Know?

Just 15 minutes of daily meditation is thought to improve memory and reduce stress. This may lead to better performance



in school and a calmer child at home. Your teen could meditate anytime simply by

sitting silently and focusing on her breathing. Or she might search online for meditation apps.

Easy on the cheese!

As an excellent source of protein and calcium, cheese can be a healthy snack. But it's also high in fat and calories. Keep your tween from overdoing it by having him aim for a 1-oz. serving (about the size of two dice). For shredded cheese, he could use a loosely packed $\frac{1}{4}$ -cup measure — that's about 1 oz.

Just for fun

Q: If you were running a race and just passed the person in second place, what place would you be in?

A: Second place.



The magic of family meals

Celebrate Family Meals Month by making a commitment to eat healthy foods together. You'll help your teen maintain a healthy weight, eat a more nutritious diet, and develop better lifelong food habits. Plus, you'll connect as a family. Consider these strategies.



Involve your child

Get her excited about preparing and eating nutritious meals. You might give her a weekly mission to find a recipe that uses seasonal produce. Or let your teenager plan a theme night like "Food Truck Friday," featuring healthier versions of food truck favorites like street corn (swap yogurt for mayo) or grilled cheese sandwiches (use whole-wheat bread).

Set an example

Mealtime is a chance for parents to demonstrate healthy eating. Studies show that people pick up the eating habits of those they share meals with. That means

seeing you pile vegetables on your plate, take a small portion of meat, and choose fruit instead of cake for dessert can be contagious!

Take time to talk

Discuss nutritious foods to help your tween learn about them. You could challenge everyone to guess the ingredients and describe the flavors in each dish. Try to keep the conversation pleasant by mentioning nice moments from your day and avoiding topics that cause tension. This helps your teen have a good attitude toward family meals. ●

Make the most of the stairs

Taking the stairs can get your tween's heart rate up, strengthen muscles, and burn double the calories of walking on a flat surface. Use these tips to help him step it up.

Start a habit. When you're out and about, urge the whole family to seek out the stairs. In a tall building, you could walk up as far as possible and ride the elevator the rest of the way. Or take breathers by stopping on landings.

Use household stairs. Encourage your child to walk up and down the stairs in your house or apartment building when he needs a break from homework or chores.

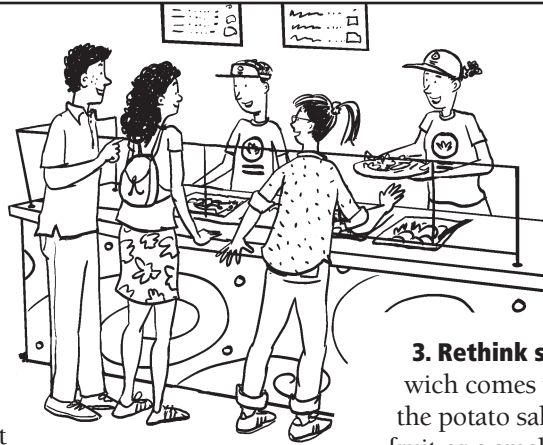
Visit the track. The school bleachers are ready-made for running steps. Have everyone start simply: Run up a set, jog across the top row, then jog down. ●



Fast, casual, and healthy

Fast casual restaurants tend to offer bigger selections of nutritious ingredients than fast food chains. Here's how your teenager can make the best decisions at these places.

1. Plan ahead. Ask your child to search for fast casual menus online that include whole grains or focus on vegetable dishes. He might find a burrito joint that has whole-wheat tortillas and brown rice or a place that specializes in salads or stir-fries.



2. Watch out for extras. Even the most nutritious flatbread sandwich or noodle bowl will be high in fat if your tween loads it up with ranch dressing or fried chicken. Encourage him to customize his orders with extra veggies or grilled chicken instead.

3. Rethink sides. If your teen's barbecue sandwich comes with a side dish, he might replace the potato salad or mac 'n' cheese with fresh fruit or a small salad. Or suggest that he top tacos with salsa and a spoonful of guacamole rather than sour cream and queso.

Tip: Restaurant portions can be huge, so your child could eat half and save the rest for the next day. ♡

Q & A Positive body image

Q: My son Liam compares himself to taller boys at school and “buff” guys on TV and then complains that he’s smaller. How can I help him?

A: First, reassure your son that how he feels is normal. Then, remind him that his body is unique and will change over time. Also, point out that just because a TV star looks muscular doesn't mean he's healthy.



Encourage your child to focus on his strengths (he's a whiz with technology, for example). You might also brainstorm ways to get more exercise. Maybe he can start doing push-ups and squats. Or he could take up an activity like karate or racquetball. Let him know the goal isn't to get “buff,” but to be strong and healthy.

Finally, avoid talking negatively or excessively about your size—or other people's—around him. This will help him learn not to focus on appearance. ♡

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ACTIVITY CORNER



Getting to 60 minutes

Your teen should get at least an hour of exercise each day to help her stay healthy. But she doesn't have to do it all at once. Share these ideas for breaking up activity into bursts.

10 in 10. Together, create a deck of 10-minute workouts on index cards. Write an exercise on each (“Jump rope,” “Do burpees”). Then, pull out a card, and do what it says whenever you have 10 minutes.

15-minute circuit. Visit a baseball diamond, or set up bases in your yard. Starting at home plate, walk or run to first, run backward to second, lunge-walk to third, and hop to home. Then, do a plank (with forearms and toes on the ground and back and legs straight), holding 30–60 seconds. Repeat the circuit for 15 minutes.

30-minute trips. Map out destinations that take 30 minutes by foot or bike. Choose places you enjoy visiting, such as the library or the park, or incorporate errands like a grocery run. ♡



In the Kitchen

Bowls: Sweet, savory, or both!

Your tween will be bowled over by these fun recipes.

Sushi roll in a bowl

For each bowl, use $\frac{1}{2}$ cup cooked brown rice, and drizzle with 1 tsp. rice vinegar. Add $\frac{1}{4}$ of a cucumber (diced), $\frac{1}{3}$ of an avocado (diced), $\frac{1}{4}$ cup cooked tofu (cubed), and 1 tsp. sesame seeds. Top with sriracha and 1 crushed nori (seaweed) snack sheet, if desired.

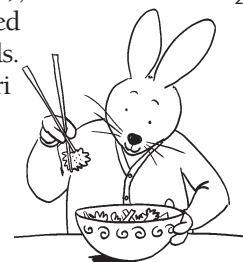
Pumpkin pie oat bowl

Mix $\frac{1}{4}$ cup canned pumpkin puree into 1 cup cooked oatmeal. Sprinkle with $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. pumpkin pie

spice (or cinnamon), 1 tbsp. raisins, 1 tbsp. pumpkin seeds, and $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. maple syrup.

Pineapple tuna bowl

Combine 1 cup salad greens with $\frac{1}{2}$ cup cooked quinoa, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup canned tuna (packed in water, drained), $\frac{1}{4}$ cup fresh pineapple chunks, and 1 tbsp. chopped red onion. Add a squeeze of fresh lime juice before serving. ♡



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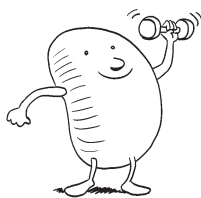
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FAST TAKES

Choose beans

From kidney beans to chickpeas to lentils, beans are a meatless way to get protein, magnesium, and fiber into your family's diet. Replace meat with beans in enchiladas, chili, burgers, or even "meatloaf." *Tips:* Soak dry beans in water overnight to decrease cooking time. If you buy canned beans, rinse them to remove excess sodium.



Walk to talk

Prompt your teenager to start a movement! If he has a friend who lives nearby, he might walk to his house to chat instead of texting. Have you and your teen fallen into the habit of texting each other even when you're in the same house? Set a family policy to get moving and talk face-to-face.

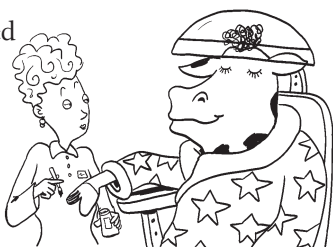
Did You Know?

Nearly one in three teens reports consuming energy drinks, even though experts say this isn't a good idea. Some contain as much caffeine as five cups of coffee and a full day's worth of added sugar! For a healthy energy boost, encourage your child to keep her water bottle and a banana on hand.

Just for fun

Q: What do you get from a pampered cow?

A: Spoiled milk.



Healthy shopping on a budget

Shopping for nutritious foods is an important life skill your teen can develop right now. Share these ideas to help him navigate the grocery store in a healthful and budget-conscious way.



Buy in bulk

Suggest that your teenager look for bulk-food staples like brown rice, oats, and chicken breasts. Point out the unit price sticker on shelves so he can make sure he's getting a better value. For instance, a 1-lb. box of rice might cost \$2 per pound while a 10-lb. bag is only 70 cents a pound.

Shop in season

Fresh seasonal fruits and vegetables usually taste better and cost less than out-of-season fresh produce trucked or flown in. Your tween could also choose frozen fruits and vegetables—they last longer than fresh, and they're just as nutritious.

Consider store brands

Higher-priced name-brand foods are often placed at eye level. But less expensive store-brand versions of dry pasta, chicken and vegetable broth, whole-wheat crackers, and cereal typically taste the same. Encourage your child to compare labels and go with the cheaper version if the nutrition stats are just as good.

Tip: Taking a shopping list—and sticking to it—can help your child buy only what he needs. Just as important, remind him not to shop while he's hungry. ♥

Committed to getting fit

Your teen can reach her fitness goals even if she has a busy schedule or faces other obstacles. Suggest these ways to overcome bumps in the road.

Not enough time. Encourage your child to write out her schedule and cut back where she can to fit in more workouts. For example, she might watch less TV or spend less time playing games on her phone.

Feeling tired. Have her try exercising at different times to see when she has the most energy, perhaps right when she gets home from school or on weekend mornings.

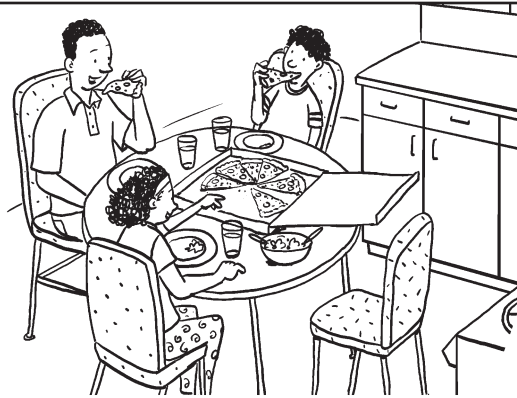
All-or-nothing thinking. If your teenager skips a day of working out, she shouldn't give up. Instead, she might run a little farther or do a few extra sit-ups the next day. ♥



A healthier pizza night

Is your family trying to eat better? Pizza night doesn't have to be a thing of the past. Just use these easy ideas to make it a little healthier.

● **Choose the right crust.** Pick thin crust instead of pan or stuffed crust to trim calories, fat, and sodium. If the pizza place offers whole-wheat crust, you might order that for extra fiber.



● **Top with care.** Opt for red sauce rather than a cream-based sauce. Try grilled chicken in place of higher-fat meats like pepperoni and sausage. And pile on vegetables, such as spinach, red bell pepper, and onions.

● **X out extras.** You could ask the pizza shop to hold any dipping sauces like garlic butter, ranch, or nacho cheese.

● **Select sensible sides.** Instead of wings, garlic knots, or fried mozzarella sticks, go for a side salad with vinaigrette.

Idea: Rather than ordering pizza, try to make your own healthier versions! Use flatbread or ready-made whole-wheat dough. Brush with a thin layer of sauce, and add veggies and a sprinkling of cheese. Everyone will have fun customizing their pies. ♡



PARENT TO PARENT Bullying and food allergies

My daughter Mallory started coming home from school hungrier than usual. When I asked her about it, she admitted that some girls had been teasing her about her peanut allergy. One girl even walked by Mallory's lunch table and smeared peanut butter on her tray, so now she's afraid to eat at school.

I consulted our allergist, who explained that this is a form of bullying, and sadly it's not uncommon. He said I should call the school counselor, who can talk to the girls involved and inform the cafeteria staff.



Also, he suggested ways Mallory can protect herself, like never leaving food unattended and confiding in friends who could help her be aware of potential threats. Finally, he recommended that Mallory and I regularly review what to do if she has an allergic reaction. ♡

ACTIVITY CORNER

Exercise at your desk

Your child probably spends a good part of each weekday sitting down to do classwork or homework. Suggest these exercises to keep his muscles moving when he's at a desk.

Leg lifts: Extend one leg parallel to the floor (without locking your knee). Hold 15 seconds, and lower. Do 10 reps with each leg.

Calf raises: With knees bent, lift both heels 4–6 inches off the floor and return to start position. Do 30 reps.

Shoulder shrugs: Raise your shoulders toward your ears. Hold 5 seconds, and lower. Repeat 10 times.

Tip: Encourage your teen to stand at a counter or a high table at homework time. Or look for a standing desk at a yard sale or secondhand store. ♡



In the Kitchen Hold the bread!

Here's a secret: You don't need bread to make sandwiches, roll-ups, or wraps. Try these yummy breadless recipes.

Turkey cucumber roll-ups

Slice a cucumber into 8 long, thin strips. Spread each slice with hummus, and top with a thin turkey slice and fresh spinach leaves. Roll up, and secure with toothpicks.

Toasted sweet potato sandwich

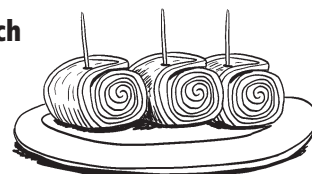
Cut a sweet potato lengthwise into 1/4-inch slices. Brown in the toaster until tender. For each "sandwich," spread 1 tbsp.

fat-free cream cheese on a sweet potato piece, add 3 thin apple slices, and sprinkle with 1/8 tsp. cinnamon. Top with another sweet potato slice.

Strawberry chicken lettuce wraps

Whisk together 3 tbsp. no-sugar-added strawberry preserves and 2 tbsp. each of apple cider vinegar, olive oil, and chopped red onion. Toss with 2 cups

chopped cooked chicken. Divide the mixture among 4 large lettuce leaves, and fold over. ♡



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