

Teen Food & Fitness

Healthy Ideas for Middle and High School Students

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Vernon Public School District
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FAST TAKES



"Wall sits"

Here's a great exercise that will strengthen your teen's legs. Suggest that she place her back against a wall, feet hip-width apart, and slide down into a sitting position. Have her hold this position for 20–40 seconds, stand up straight, and repeat three times. *Tip:* She can try this while watching TV.



Did You Know?

When teens don't get enough sleep, they tend to eat more. That's because a lack of sleep affects the hormones that regulate appetite. Plus, being awake longer gives them more time to snack! Encourage your teen to get 8½–10 hours of sleep a night and to avoid eating anything heavy within two hours of bedtime.

Contact lens care

Does your child wear contact lenses? Encourage him to follow the care guidelines on his lenses' package. For example, wearing two-week lenses longer may cause an eye infection. Have him mark his calendar when he puts in his contacts and when he should replace them.

Just for fun

Q: How can you tell that clocks are always hungry?

A: They have seconds.



In the mood for breakfast

Whether your child springs out of bed ready to face the day or wakes up grumpy and doesn't want to talk to anyone, she needs breakfast! Look to her morning mood for clues on how to fit in a healthy meal before school. Consider these ideas.



Talkative

Maybe your tween likes to chat between bites. If so, try to plan time to eat together. Or she could invite a friend for breakfast, and then they can walk to the bus stop together. She'll be more apt to enjoy a nutritious breakfast when she has someone to share it with.

Sleepy

For a child who is groggy in the morning and prefers quiet, put the newspaper or a magazine at the kitchen table so she can read while she eats. Try simple comfort foods like scrambled eggs or hot oatmeal with fruit and nuts. *Idea:* Think about playing soft music to help keep the mood calm.

Early bird

Swim practice? Morning news show? If your teen is busy with before-school activities, it might be easier for her to eat at the cafeteria. Talk about food choices that will give her the energy she needs, such as hard-boiled eggs and whole-wheat toast or whole-grain cereal with fat-free milk.

Rushed

Even with the alarm set, your child might not get up in time and be rushing to make the bus. For a quick breakfast she can eat on the run, keep low-sugar granola bars, bagged cereal, or nonfat yogurt and disposable spoons on hand. ♡

Try this!

Here are three ideas that will have your youngster looking forward to his morning meal.

1. Waffle sundae. Top whole-grain waffles with sugar-free jam, nonfat whipped cream, and chopped almonds.

2. Fruit sandwiches. Put nonfat cream cheese and apple slices on a toasted multigrain English muffin. Or try pear slices and cheese melted on whole-wheat bread.

3. Granola goodness. For a make-ahead breakfast that will last a week (or more), mix 4 cups old-fashioned oats, ½ cup sunflower seeds, ½ cup maple syrup or honey, and 1½ tbsp. canola oil. Spread on a baking sheet, and cook at 350° for 25 minutes. Stir in 1 cup raisins after baking. ♡



Food allergies: Friends matter

Your teen probably has at least one friend with food allergies. To help him understand how to lend a hand, review these tips together.

Learn about allergies. Suggest that he Google his friend's allergy to find out more about it (a good source is www.foodallergy.org). If someone is allergic to nuts, milk, eggs, soy, wheat, or seafood, for example, the food might cause a mild reaction like a rash or a much more serious, life-threatening event. Let your child know it's okay to ask about food allergies, but his friend might feel more comfortable talking one-on-one rather than in a group.



Become a label reader. People with food allergies need to look carefully at ingredients on labels. But tweens with allergies may be shy about checking labels in front of peers. Encourage your child to get in

the habit of reading labels for nutritional information—he will make healthier food choices for himself *and* be able to help his friend avoid allergens.

Avoid sharing food. Remind your child not to share food. Swapping may accidentally lead a friend to eat something that triggers an allergic reaction. *Tip:* Recommend that your youngster wash his hands thoroughly after eating to make sure he doesn't transfer food to an object his allergic friend might touch. ♥

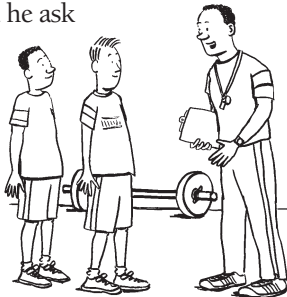


PARENT TO PARENT Help with training

When my son Zach decided to go out for varsity football, he said he needed to start training and change his diet. At first, he talked about fitness supplements and an intense weight-training schedule like the ones his favorite pro athletes follow.

I was concerned that he'd go too far, so I suggested that he ask his junior varsity coach for ideas. I also talked to other parents and found out about a free weight-training class for teens at our community center. With the advice of the coach and the nutritional tips he got during the class, my son feels like he's getting into better shape.

I'm sure Zach will still see pictures of athletes he wants to look like. But at least now he's getting support from people he trusts to help him reach realistic fitness goals. ♥



ACTIVITY CORNER

Cardio workouts

Kids need at least 60 minutes of physical activity a day to stay healthy. To help your teen or tween make that happen, try these suggestions.



- **Find a time.** Encourage her to work exercise into her regular schedule. Have her write it in her student planner, just as she would any other calendar item. *Tip:* She could set a timer on her cell phone to remind her when exercise time comes around.

- **Take a friend.** Working out with a partner makes it more fun—and less likely that your child will skip it. *Idea:* Remember that, as a parent, you might be an ideal fitness partner! You'll get to spend time together, plus you will get in your own exercise, too.

- **Pick a class.** If your child commits to a class, she'll be more likely to stick with it. Chances are she'll get to know other teens, and they'll call or email if she doesn't show up. Help her look for something she'll like, such as kickboxing or Zumba. ♥

In the Kitchen One-pot meals

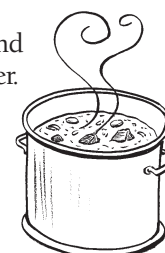
A stew or soup is a cozy winter meal. Here are several to try.

Beef stew. Place 2 lb. cubed meat in a large pot, with 1½ cups beef broth whisked with ½ tsp. garlic powder, 1 tsp. paprika, and 1 tsp. Worcestershire sauce. Add 3 diced potatoes and 4 sliced carrots. Cover and simmer about an hour. Stir in ¼ cup flour, and simmer 15 more minutes until tender.

Pasta fagioli. Heat 1 tbsp. olive oil in a heavy-bottomed pot, and sauté 1 minced garlic clove and ¼ cup chopped onion. Mix in a 28-oz. can diced tomatoes, an 8-oz. can tomato

sauce, and ½ tsp. Italian seasoning. Bring to a boil, cover, and simmer for 25 minutes. Add 2 cups cooked penne pasta and a 15-oz. can kidney beans (drained). Simmer 5 minutes more.

Chicken-corn chowder. Thaw a 10-oz. package corn, and puree in a blender with 2 cups nonfat milk. In a large pot, mix 2 cups chicken broth, ½ tsp. onion powder, 2 cups cooked chicken, and another 10-oz. package thawed corn kernels. Stir in the pureed corn, and simmer for 5 minutes. ♥



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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