

Teen Food & Fitness

Healthy Ideas for Middle and High School Students

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Stonington Public Schools Nutrition Services
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FAST TAKES



Easy as Pi!

Celebrate Pi Day on March 14 by challenging your tween to come up with healthy “pie” recipes.



Maybe he'll pick a crustless quiche or a pizza with a cauliflower crust. No matter

what size pie he makes, its circumference will be approximately 3.14 times its diameter!

Start a fitness club

Being part of a regular fitness club is a great way for your teen to stay active. She and a few friends could decide where and when their club will meet—after school or on week-ends—and how often. They could share ideas for activities (sprints, Rollerblading) and assign a leader for each meeting.

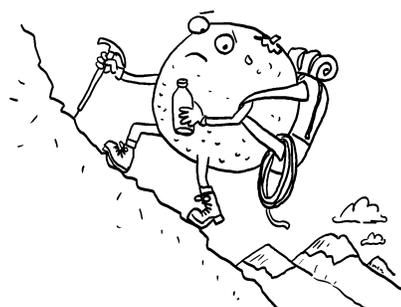
Did You Know?

Replacing red meat with other proteins may help your teen have a healthier heart. Swap ground beef for lean ground turkey in burgers and meatloaf. Serve fish instead of pot roast, or give beans the starring role in tacos, burritos, and chili.

Just for fun

Q: Why couldn't the orange make it up the mountain?

A: It ran out of juice.



Eating during growth spurts

It's a familiar scenario for parents of tweens and teens: kids raiding the fridge even though they just ate, and outgrowing their clothes seemingly overnight. Try these tips to give your child the extra fuel she needs during growth spurts.

Plan for after-school snacks

Growing teens often come home hungry—especially if they have an early lunch period. That means your child may want a substantial after-school snack. She might wrap up leftovers at dinner to eat for tomorrow's snack. Or perhaps she'll add hummus, carrots, and snap peas to the grocery list. *Tip:* Encourage her to wash down her snack with nonfat milk, which contains calcium for her developing bones.

Choose satisfying foods

Offer healthy *and* hearty foods to fill your tween up—and make her less likely to reach for chips and cookies. High protein foods, such as lean chicken, eggs, and low-fat cottage cheese, can stave off



hunger. Fiber-rich foods are filling, too, so have her eat plenty of whole grains (brown rice, whole-wheat pasta) and leafy greens (arugula, kale).

Provide healthy fats

Your teen's brain is growing rapidly, too, which means it needs omega-3s (good fats) found in foods like avocados, fish, and nut or seed butter. She could combine mashed avocado with canned tuna and spread it on whole-wheat crackers. Or she might enjoy a peanut butter and banana sandwich on whole-grain bread. ●

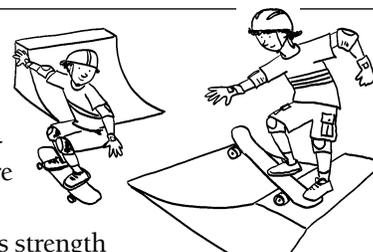
Prevent injuries

By following a few simple rules, your active child has a better chance of avoiding injuries.

● **Use the right equipment.** Helmets, pads, and supportive shoes all go a long way toward keeping your tween safe. *Tip:* Ask his coach or a store clerk to check the fit.

● **Increase activity gradually.** If your child does strength training, have him start with lighter weights or fewer reps and add more as he gets stronger. For running, he should steadily build up to longer distances and a faster pace. Encourage him to pay attention to his body and cut back if necessary.

Note: Watch out for pain. If your youngster is limping or has numbness, swelling, or loss of flexibility, he should see a doctor. ●

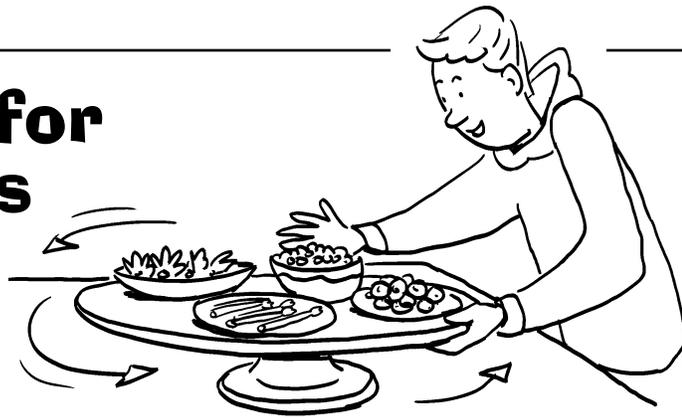


Strategies for picky eaters

Mark didn't think he liked asparagus until he tried it roasted and topped with Parmesan cheese. And Jenna decided she liked black beans after her parents kept serving them.

These tweens are becoming more well-rounded eaters, and your child can, too. Here's how.

Start small. Give him a small amount of a new food first, then gradually increase it. Adding chopped mushrooms to spaghetti sauce may help your tween realize that he likes the



flavor. Next, maybe he'll eat mushrooms in scrambled eggs or on pizza.

Rotate regularly. Consider serving at least one new food each week. You could have quinoa this week, then tofu the next. Keep the new foods in your regular dinner lineup, even if your child

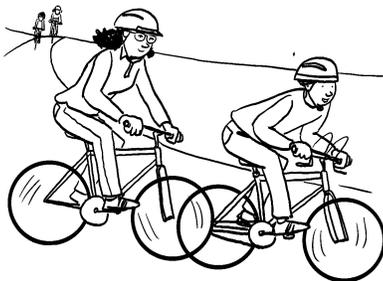
doesn't like them at first. Research shows kids may have to try the same food 12–14 times before they develop a taste for it.

Experiment with cooking methods. Help your tween discover that the same food can taste different depending on how it's cooked. If boiled brussels sprouts don't appeal to him, try roasting them. Or if he's not a fan of steamed spinach, he might find that he likes raw baby spinach in salads. ●

Q & A Managing diabetes

Q: What should we do to help our teenage son manage his diabetes?

A: One way you might help is by making dietary changes as a family. If your teen isn't the only one who has to limit sweets or cut down on carbs, it could make healthy eating easier for him.



Also, regular physical activity is important for everyone, and it helps to control blood sugar in people with diabetes. Talk to your son's doctor about how much and what kind of exercise is appropriate for him.

Then, encourage him to find activities he enjoys and stick with them. Join him to help him stay motivated—and to keep the whole family more active. ●



ACTIVITY CORNER

Dance for cardio

Dancing makes it fun to work up a sweat. Encourage your teen to pick her favorite upbeat playlist and try these cardio ideas.

1. Skater glide. No ice is required for this move! Extend your right arm to the side with your left arm across your chest. Cross your left leg behind your right and squat slightly. In a fluid motion, hop left while swinging both arms left and switching arm and leg positions. Keep "gliding" back and forth quickly.

2. "Conga" line. Ask friends and family members to line up, with hands on the shoulders of the person in front of them. Snake around the room, copying the leader's moves. For an extra challenge, add the limbo. Let two people hold a broom horizontally, while the other dancers bend backward to go underneath without touching the broom or the floor. Lower the broom each time the conga comes around. ●



In the Kitchen

Twists on diner classics

Does your child love going to the diner? Bring the diner home—in a healthier way—with these recipes.

Cinnamon oatmeal pancakes

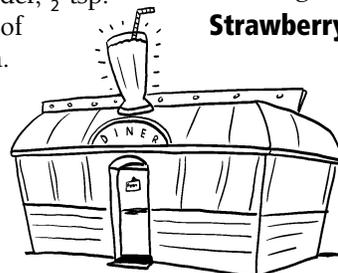
Grind $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups old-fashioned oats in a blender. Add 1 egg, 1 cup nonfat milk, $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. baking powder, $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. cinnamon, and a pinch of salt. Blend until smooth. Drop $\frac{1}{4}$ cup batter in a hot skillet (coated with nonstick spray) and cook until golden, flipping once. Top with crushed berries.

Tomato grilled cheese

Make a sandwich on whole-grain bread with reduced-fat cheddar cheese and tomato slices. Brush the outside of the sandwich lightly with olive oil. Grill in a heated pan for 5 minutes per side, or until golden.

Strawberry "milkshake"

Blend $\frac{1}{2}$ cup frozen banana chunks, 1 cup frozen strawberries, 2 cups nonfat milk or nondairy milk, and $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. vanilla extract until smooth and creamy. ●



OUR PURPOSE

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

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