

# Teen Food & Fitness

Healthy Ideas for Middle and High School Students

April 2019

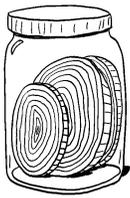
Stonington Public Schools Nutrition Services  
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## FAST TAKES

### Reuse jars

Glass jars are an earth-friendly alternative to plastic freezer bags for keeping food fresh longer. Ask your teen to clean them and fill them with cereal or pasta from opened boxes. Or she could use them to save shredded lettuce or sliced onions for salads or sandwiches.



### Drive less, walk more

Once your teen gets his driver's license, he may want to drive everywhere. Remind him that walking or biking for shorter trips is a good way to exercise. *Tip:* When he does drive, suggest that he park farther away so he can do some walking.

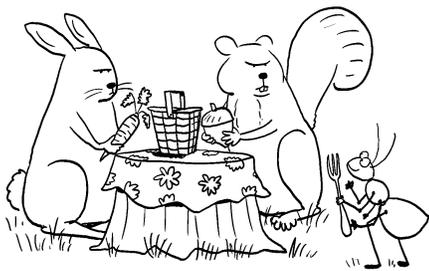
### Did You Know?

If your tween wears braces, she can still enjoy her favorite tastes—with a few adjustments. Instead of eating tortilla chips, she could cut soft tortillas into triangles to dip in guacamole. Nut butter on whole-wheat bread is a good alternative to nuts. And a soft pretzel bun dipped in mustard may satisfy her craving for pretzels.

### Just for fun

**Q:** Who comes to a picnic even though they're not invited?

**A:** Ants.



## Food that's fast on the go

Hitting the road doesn't have to mean hitting up fast-food places. Keep bellies full and energy levels high by encouraging your tween or teen to pack or choose healthier "fast food." Try these tips.

### Stock up

Ask your tween to create "fill-up" stations so he can grab nutritious snacks on his way out the door. On a shelf in the fridge, he could arrange portable options like small yogurt cartons, string cheese, and snack-size bags of carrots. And he might fill a basket to keep in the pantry with non-perishables like protein bars, whole-grain crackers, and popcorn.

### Mimic menus

Your teen can put healthy spins on drive-thru favorites. Does he love Mexican-style chains? Maybe he'll roll up black beans, brown rice, and salsa in a whole-grain tortilla, then wrap it in foil. If he's a fan of chicken nuggets, perhaps



he will take along leftover grilled chicken and a container of honey mustard.

### Scope out options

Ask your tween to find more nutritious "fast food" around town. Knowing where these restaurants are located can help him make better decisions in a pinch. For example, at a bagel shop, he could get a whole-wheat bagel with fat-free cream cheese and a piece of fresh fruit. And a coffeehouse may carry prepared salads or cheese and fruit packs. ♡

## Move more with outdoor chores

Turn springtime chores into an opportunity for your child to exercise. Consider these suggestions.

- **Mow.** Show her how to mow the yard and pack cuttings into lawn bags. She'll work up a sweat and get her heart pumping.
- **Garden.** Encourage your tween to try gardening. She might plant flowers or vegetables in your yard or volunteer at a school or community garden. Pulling weeds and hauling and spreading mulch all strengthen arm muscles.
- **Wash.** Have your teen wash windows or power-wash siding and fences. She will get a workout as she bends, stretches, and scrubs. ♡



# Beyond rice and pasta

There's a whole world of grains out there for your teen to discover. Encourage her to eat more fiber-rich whole grains by offering her different varieties. Here are a few ideas.

**Quinoa swap.** Broccoli and cheese quinoa casserole, anyone? For an easy way to introduce your child to quinoa, swap it into dishes she likes that call for rice, such as casseroles and stir-fries.



**"Noodle" soup.** Add barley to soups. It's tasty in place of pasta in chicken noodle soup, and it makes vegetable soup heartier. Suggest that your teen stir in barley as she would noodles and cook until tender.

**Greens + grains.** Whole grains give more flavor and texture to salads. Sprinkle cooked bulgur into a green salad. Bulgur can

even be the main ingredient in an entree salad. Combine it with cooked corn, tomatoes, feta cheese, and your teenager's favorite dressing.

*Note:* At least half of your child's grains should be whole. Tweens and teens need 3–4 servings of whole grains each day—a serving equals about  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup cooked. ♣

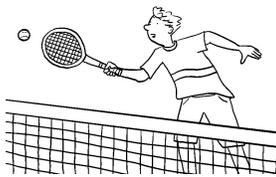
## ACTIVITY CORNER



## Switch it up

Cross-training lets your teen athlete work muscles he might not use in his regular sport, which keeps things interesting and may also help prevent injuries. Share this advice for making cross-training part of his routine:

- Encourage your child to write his sports practices and games on a calendar, then add cross-training on his days off. Maybe he'll make plans to run with friends or do stretches with you.



- Suggest that your teenager enroll in PE every semester. In a general PE class, he'll do a variety of activities, such as gymnastics, volleyball, and even line dancing. Or he could sign up for a course focusing on a single sport other than the one he normally plays.
- Help your tween stay active and try something new during the off-season. A swimmer might take yoga classes, or a tennis player could join a community soccer league. ♣

## PARENT TO PARENT

## Learning to manage lactose intolerance

When my daughter Maya was diagnosed with lactose intolerance recently, I worried about how she would adjust to her new diet—and get enough calcium. Fortunately, her doctor had plenty of suggestions.

He gave us a list of words Maya should look for on food labels, including *whey* and *casein*. They indicate that a product contains lactose, the ingredient that causes her stomach problems.

Now when we go shopping, Maya gets lactose-free milk or nondairy milk like soy or almond (fortified with calcium and vitamin D). And we're all eating more leafy greens, such as kale and chard, since the doctor told us they have a lot of calcium.

Finally, the doctor mentioned that lactase enzyme supplements are available over the counter. Maya can take one with dairy so she'll be able to digest it. ♣



## In the Kitchen

## Skillet suppers

Save time and effort with these flavorful, nutritious skillet dishes.

**"Unstuffed" peppers.** Brown 1 lb. lean ground turkey in a skillet over medium heat. Stir in 2 cups cooked brown rice, 1 can diced tomatoes, 1 diced green pepper, and 1 tsp. chili powder. Heat through, and top with  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup shredded low-fat cheddar.

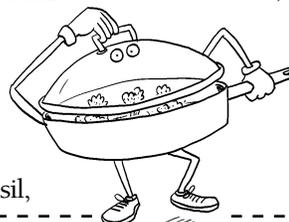
### Tomato basil penne.

Combine 12 oz. uncooked whole-grain penne, 1 pint grape tomatoes,  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp. garlic powder, 1 tsp. each onion powder and dried basil,

2 tbsp. olive oil, and  $4\frac{1}{2}$  cups water in a skillet. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat, and simmer 9 minutes, until pasta is tender.

**Veggie pizza.** Press 1 lb. refrigerated whole-wheat pizza dough into an ovenproof skillet (coated with cooking spray). Cook over medium heat for 2 minutes. Top with  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup low-sodium marinara, sliced mushrooms, fresh

spinach, and  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup low-fat shredded mozzarella. Brush the edges with olive oil, and bake at 450° for about 30 minutes, until the cheese melts. ♣



## OUR PURPOSE

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

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