

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

Novel eats

Encourage your tween to read about—and eat—healthy foods with this idea. Have her look for a novel that includes a recipe or descriptions of meals. Then, suggest that she give the dish a nutritious spin. After reading a story set in Sweden, she might make Swedish meatballs with lean turkey, for instance.



Train for spring

January is the time to begin gearing up for a spring race or sports tryouts. Preparing for a 5K? Your teen can start by alternating walking and running and work up to running the entire distance. If he's trying out for baseball or lacrosse, he could do drills with a friend.

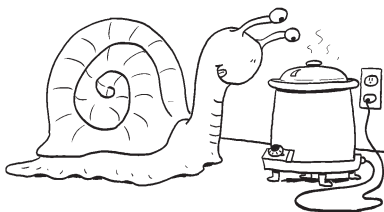
Did You Know?

Chewing sugar-free gum after eating can help protect your children's teeth when brushing isn't an option. The extra saliva washes away bacteria that could lead to cavities. Plus, chewing gum is a good way to avoid extra snacking. *Note:* Remind them that they may not be allowed to chew gum in school.

Just for fun

Q: How does a snail prepare his food?

A: In a slow cooker!



A portion-size pro

Understanding healthy portion sizes will help your teen eat the right amount. Share these strategies.

Check food labels

A nutrition label tells your child how big one serving is. He may be surprised! Have him pour out what he thinks is a serving, then check the label and measure out an actual serving. How close was his estimate? Encourage him to get in the habit of reading labels and eating no more than the recommended amount.

Use a "handy" guide

No need to carry around measuring cups or spoons—suggest that your teenager memorize a few simple guidelines for eyeballing portions. A fist is about 1 cup, the recommended portion for foods like pasta and cereal. His palm is a good measure for meat or tofu (3 oz.). And he could use the top of his thumb to estimate a serving of butter or oil (1 tsp.).



Divide the plate

Have your teen picture a line dividing his plate in half. Then, he should cover half of the plate with fruits and vegetables. He'll naturally have just the right amount of space for protein and grains, which will lead him to take healthy portions. He can add a glass of fat-free milk, and he's got a complete meal. ♥

Avoiding knee injuries

Knee problems are becoming more common among young people. Share these strategies your child can use to protect her knees.

- **Warm up.** Before workouts, warm up the muscles in the fronts and backs of your legs by walking briskly for 5 minutes.
- **Jump correctly.** To practice the correct motion, jump and land softly with your knees slightly bent and pointed straight forward, keeping your chest held high.
- **Strengthen leg muscles.** Try incorporating slow lunges into your workouts. Step with your right leg so your knee is at a 90-degree angle over your ankle—not angled toward your toes. Work up to 10 lunges per leg. ♥



Refuel after school

Having a bite to eat after school is an opportunity for your teen to get extra nutrients and quiet her rumbling tummy. She can try these ideas for healthy snacks.

On the go. If your child has after-school activities, make sure she takes a snack with her instead of relying on a vending machine. She might pack an



apple and string cheese or a nut or seed butter sandwich. She won't be tempted by chips and candy, and she'll save money.

Before dinner. Post a menu on the refrigerator or send a group text to your family telling them what's for dinner this week. Before your teenager grabs a snack, she can check the menu and decide what to eat. If you're serving pasta, she might opt for a light snack like celery sticks and cucumber slices with low-fat ranch dressing. ●

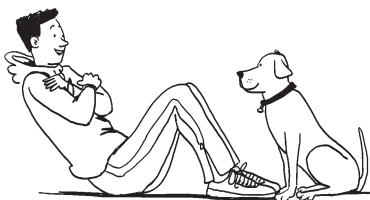
ACTIVITY CORNER



Back to basics

If your teen wants to start an exercise program but isn't sure how, suggest that he go back to basics. No gym membership or fancy equipment is required! Here are two tried-and-true workouts.

1. Calisthenics. Push-ups and sit-ups are classics that never go out of style. Your teenager could add one push-up or three sit-ups with each workout. Maybe he'll aim to work up to two sets of 10 push-ups and three sets of 15 sit-ups.



2. Aerobics. Your teen can strengthen his heart and lungs for PE and sports by doing simple jumping jacks, jogging in place, or jumping rope. ●

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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PARENT TO PARENT

Resolve to drink less soda

Our family made a New Year's resolution to drink less soda and more water. My daughter Jasmine pitched the idea when she saw just how many interesting flavors of sparkling water there were at the store.

She picked out cranberry-orange, coconut, and passion fruit. We also bought plain sparkling water in bulk so she could make her own flavored waters. So far her favorite combinations are frozen strawberries with fresh mint, and frozen blueberries with a drop of vanilla extract. When we don't have sparkling water, we add our flavor combos to regular tap water.

We've all cut back on soda now that Jasmine prefers sparkling water. She loves that it's sweet and bubbly like soda, and I'm happy it has no calories, salt, or added sugar. ●



In the Kitchen Snack boards

With a tray or a wooden cutting board and some creativity, your teen can prepare a healthy snack board to enjoy with the entire family.

Turkey with dressings

Place slices of roasted turkey in mounds on the board. Put cucumber slices, snap peas, and cherry tomatoes throughout. Add small dishes of spicy brown mustard and cranberry jam. Fill gaps with pretzel chips and orange segments.

Sweet and cheesy

Display pear slices in a fan pattern. Layer sliced sharp cheddar cheese and

whole-grain crackers around the pears. Cover empty spaces with roasted sunflower seeds, dried cherries, and mini dark chocolate chips.

Tex-Mex

Arrange small bowls of refried black beans, salsa, and guacamole in a triangle. Surround the bowls with baked tortilla chips, colorful bell pepper spears, baby carrots, and sliced radish. Finish with a dish of cinnamon-dusted pumpkin seeds. ●

