

# 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

### Allergies and eating out

Food allergies don't have to keep your teen from eating out with friends. Suggest that he keep a list of ingredients he's allergic to in his wallet or phone for quick reference. He could also ask servers questions about foods to make sure that nothing he orders contains the ingredients he's allergic to.

### Did You Know?

One tablespoon of oil has about 120 calories.

Instead of pouring freely when cooking, use a measuring spoon. A good rule of thumb when roasting vegetables, for instance, is to use 1 tsp. of oil per cup of veggies. If you saute or stir-fry foods, consider switching to nonstick cooking spray, which has almost no calories.



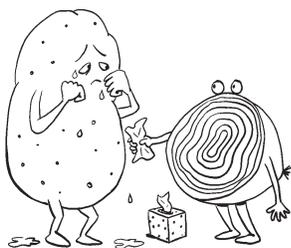
### Rest days

More weight training is not necessarily better. Rest days let your tween's muscles recover and reduce the chances she'll get burned out. Suggest she stick to every other day or at least avoid working the same muscle group two days in a row.

### Just for fun

**Q:** What do you get when you cross a potato with an onion?

**A:** A potato with watery eyes.



## Waste less

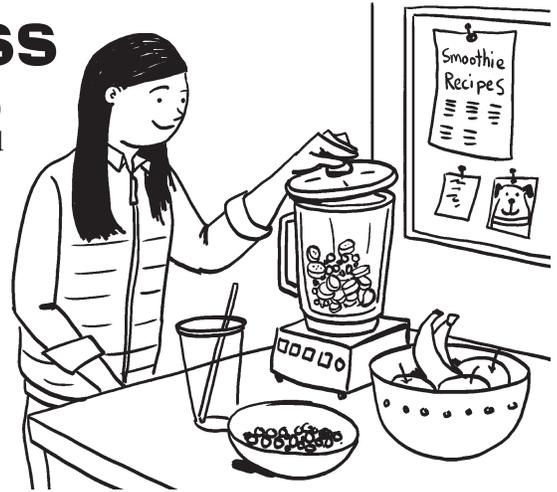
Does your teen realize that 40 percent of the food in the United States is thrown out? Inspire her to be part of the food-waste solution with these tips.

### Use what you have

How long can your family go without grocery shopping—and still have complete meals? Ask each person to list as many meals as possible using what's in your kitchen. Maybe your child will find a can of white beans, a bag of frozen kale, and a few whole tomatoes to combine into a stew. Compare your lists and vote on which ones to cook this week.

### Give foods a second chance

Just because some foods are a few days old doesn't mean they have to go to waste. Maybe your tween could use overripe bananas for banana bread or smoothies. Or turn stale bread into croutons or breadcrumbs. Keep a list on the refrigerator of ways to reuse foods



that are close to expiring, and add to it as you come up with new ideas.

### Get involved

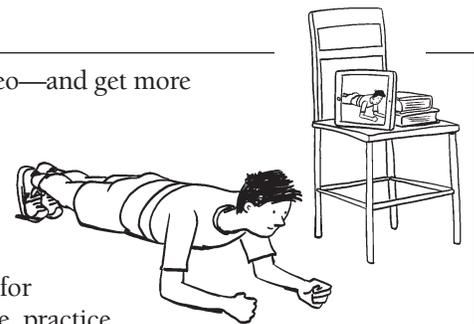
Consider volunteering with organizations in your community working to reduce food waste. Ask your teen to do the research. Your family might join a group that delivers unused food from farms, restaurants, or grocery stores to people in need. Or perhaps she'll find a compost drop-off site (see [litterless.com/wheretocompost](http://litterless.com/wheretocompost)) where food scraps are recycled to enrich soil. ♡

## Ready, set, action!

Your child can have fun making a video—and get more exercise—with this idea.

**Record a video.** Encourage your teenager to look through workout videos online and jot down exercises he likes or that will help him with a sport he does. A swimmer might include planks, for example. He could put together a routine, practice it, and record himself.

**Follow along.** Now your teen has a customized workout ready to go. He could exercise while watching his video alone or invite a friend or family member to join him. ♡



# Family mealtime

Sharing meals gives your family time to connect and check in with each other. It's also linked to children doing better in school and eating healthier diets. Plan and enjoy family meals with these tips.

**Set dates.** Schedule meals to get everyone together when you can, at least a few times a week. Mark it on a family calendar, and stick to it.



**Make prep simple.** Look for ways to create stress-free meals. You might have an indoor picnic. No cooking required—just have your tween help you fill a basket with whole-wheat bread, sandwich fixings, and fruit, and carry it into the living room. Or do a “build-your-own” night. Put out flatbread toppings or taco fillings and let everyone make their own meal.

**Keep it light.** Your teen will enjoy meals more if conversations are pleasant—and talking between bites can help prevent overeating. Have him write conversation starters on index cards. Here are a few ideas: “If you opened a store, what would you sell?” “What made you smile or laugh today?”

## ACTIVITY CORNER



## How about martial arts?

Martial arts can improve more than your tween's muscles. With a focus on discipline and concentration, her confidence can soar as she moves from belt to belt. Share these suggestions.

● **Consider different types.** Have your child look at online videos or visit nearby classes to figure out which style she might like. Some, like karate, involve more kicking, while others, such as tai chi, are about smooth movements.

● **Take a class.** Call your local community center to ask about free or discounted classes in your area. Many martial arts classes are designed for skill level rather than age, so you and your youngster could enjoy a class together.



## Q & A Switching to whole grains

**Q:** I grew up on white rice and white bread, but my son Noah learned in school that we should eat more whole grains. How do we make the switch?

**A:** Whole grains have more fiber and fill you up because they take longer to digest. So switching to whole grains is a good choice.

Start with grains that are a mix of whole grain and white, such as “whole wheat white” bread or pasta that's 50 percent whole wheat. Once your family gets used to those, buy 100 percent. Also, look for ways to help everyone adjust, perhaps by cooking brown rice in favorite dishes like stuffed peppers or casseroles.

Finally, shop from bulk bins at the supermarket to buy small amounts of unfamiliar grains like farro, bulgur, or barley. That way, your family can sample them and find the ones you like best.



## In the Kitchen Quick soups

Take the chill out of cool nights with these teen-friendly soups.

### Cheeseburger

Brown 1 lb. extra-lean ground beef or turkey and 1 cup chopped onion over medium heat in a stockpot. Stir in 1 8-oz. can no-salt-added tomato sauce, 4 cups low-sodium beef broth, 1 16-oz. package frozen mixed vegetables, and 1 tsp. garlic powder. Cover and simmer until

the vegetables are tender, about 15 minutes. Top each bowl with 1 tbsp. shredded cheddar.

### Butternut squash

In a large pot, saute 1 chopped onion in 1 tsp. olive oil. Add 4 cups diced butternut squash (fresh or frozen) and a pinch of nutmeg. Cover with 6 cups vegetable broth. Simmer until the squash is tender, about 20 minutes. Carefully puree in batches until smooth.



## OUR PURPOSE

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

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