

Teen Food & Fitness

Healthy Ideas for Middle and High School Students

October 2020

FAST TAKES

Wash your produce

Though “wash” may make your teenager think of suds, she shouldn’t use soap to clean fruits and vegetables. Instead, she can rinse produce under cool running water and rub with her hands or a vegetable brush. *Note:* She should wash all produce whether she’ll peel it or not.



Daily stretching

Toe touches in front of the TV, lunges while waiting for the microwave to beep ... stretching exercises like these fit easily into your child’s day. Plus, they require no equipment. Anytime he finds himself sitting or standing around, he could take the opportunity to improve his flexibility by picking a stretch and doing a few reps.

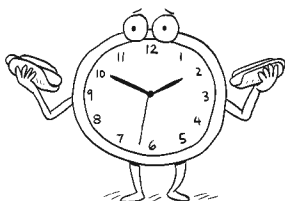
Did You Know?

Caffeine can increase your teen’s heart rate and make her nervous and irritable. If she complains of being sleepy during the day, suggest alternatives to coffee and other caffeinated drinks. A walk or a healthy snack and a glass of water may perk her up. And if she feels tired frequently, check that she’s getting enough sleep (8–10 hours per night).

Just for fun

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

A: They have seconds.



Pleasant family meals

Tweens and teens who regularly eat meals with their families tend to do better in school and are at a lower risk for obesity and eating disorders. Rev up your child’s appetite for family time with this recipe for meals that everyone will look forward to.



A dash of input

Meals are more enjoyable if your teen likes what’s on the menu, so put him in charge some nights. He might make a meal inspired by a favorite book, like a healthy version of the root vegetable pie from the Redwall series (Brian Jacques). Or maybe he’ll pick a theme, like the beach. He could serve fish tacos with mango salsa—be sure to wear summer clothes to the table!

A pinch of atmosphere

Ask your child to create playlists to fit different meals, perhaps party songs for a spread of nutritious finger foods (chicken meatballs on toothpicks, raw veggies and dip) or classical music for a

dinner of traditional family dishes. Or he may suggest going outdoors for a nice fall picnic—add physical activity by taking a walk afterward.

A sprinkle of adventure

Invite faraway relatives to join you for dinner via video chat. Consider making the same meal so you feel even more like you’re eating together. *Idea:* Ahead of time, have your teen send everyone food-related questions (“What is your favorite fruit?”), then use the answers to create a dinnertime quiz. You’ll discover how well you know each other and learn what relatives like to eat. ♡

Two-player games

When there aren’t enough people for a full game of basketball or hockey, play these versions for two. They’re a little silly, but a lot of fun! *Note:* Use rolled-up socks for the ball or puck.



Basketball. One player forms a basket with her arms while the other tries to toss the “ball” in. (No dunking allowed!) To make things more challenging and more active, the “basket” should keep moving.

Field hockey. On a garage floor, driveway, or playground blacktop, use sidewalk chalk to draw a goal. Then, play with brooms or real hockey sticks and a sock “puck.” One person defends the goal, while the other tries to score. Play six periods (one minute each), alternating roles each period. ♡

A whole-grain remix

Whole grains come in many flavors and textures, and your teen will reap their nutrition advantages by eating them in unexpected ways. Share these ideas.

Corn. Both a vegetable and a whole grain, corn can be the star ingredient in a simple salad—just add shredded lettuce, diced tomatoes, and cold black beans. Or your



child could bake soft corn tortillas until crispy, then pile high with her favorite sautéed vegetables for healthy tostadas.

Tip: Use plain popcorn as a crunchy soup topper.

Quinoa. Though it's scientifically a seed, quinoa counts as a whole grain in your teen's diet. Use it in place of rice sometimes for more protein and fiber. Also, suggest that your child add nuts, seeds, or her favorite fruit to cooked quinoa for a sweet and crunchy breakfast.

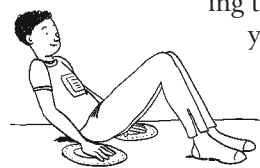
ACTIVITY CORNER

Paper plate workouts

What's made of paper, convenient to keep on hand, and can be used for fun workouts? Paper plates! Suggest that your child try these exercises for a full-body strength workout.

Sliding sit-up

Lie on your back with your arms straight out to your sides, palms down, and the plates under your palms. Slide your arms down to your sides as you sit up. Bend your knees as you rise, keeping the plates under your palms.



Slowly slide back to the starting position. Repeat

5–10 times. *Tip:* Keep your back straight for the best abdominal workout.

Sliding push-up

Stand with feet hip-width apart and one paper plate under each foot. Bend your knees, and put your hands flat on the floor in front of you, slightly more than shoulder-width apart. Slide your feet backward until you're in a push-up position. Complete one push-up, and return to a squat. Do 10 repetitions. 🍷

PARENT TO PARENT

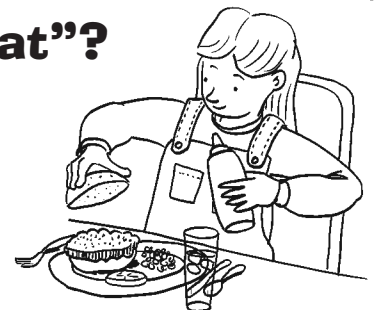
Meatless “meat”?

Our family has been trying to eat less meat lately. My

daughter Penny suggested we get some of those plant-based burgers that are designed to taste like meat. I wondered if they were healthy, so I asked her to look up the nutrition information online.

Penny discovered that many brands of meatless burgers have more fiber than beef burgers. However, most of the brands she looked at also have less protein, more saturated fat, and more sodium. In fact, some contain more than half the daily value of saturated fat per serving!

For now, we've decided to make our own versions of plant-based burgers at home. So far we've tried black bean and rice patties, and we've marinated and grilled portobello mushroom caps for “burgers.” 🍷



In the Kitchen

Savory muffins

Your teen may think of muffins as sweet treats—but he can make healthy savory muffins, too. Here's how.

Preheat oven to 375°. In a small bowl, beat 2 eggs with 1 ¼ cup low-fat buttermilk and ¼ cup canola oil. In a large bowl, whisk together 2 cups flour, 2 tsp. baking powder, ½ tsp. each baking soda and salt, and ¼ tsp. pepper.



Mix everything in the big bowl, then add one of these combinations:

- **Apple sausage:** 8 oz. cooked turkey sausage and 1 small diced apple
- **Cheesy spinach:** 1 cup chopped, sautéed spinach (6 cups raw) and 1 cup low-fat shredded cheddar cheese
- **Tomato basil:** 1 large diced tomato and 1 tsp. each garlic powder and dried basil

Pour into lightly greased 12-cup muffin tin. Bake 20–25 minutes, until a toothpick comes out clean. 🍷

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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