

Teen Food & Fitness

Healthy Ideas for Middle and High School Students

April 2021

Gonzales Independent School District

FAST TAKES

Cook for others

Delivering home-cooked meals is a good way for your teen to help people who are sick or have lost their jobs. She might even set up a “meal tree” for families in need, so others can pitch in as well. Have her find out about any dietary restrictions—and the family’s likes or dislikes—ahead of time.

A trip down memory lane

Children may become less active as they grow into teenagers. Try reminding your teen of activities he used to enjoy, such as climbing across the monkey bars or playing four square. Revisiting childhood pastimes can spark nostalgia and get him moving again.



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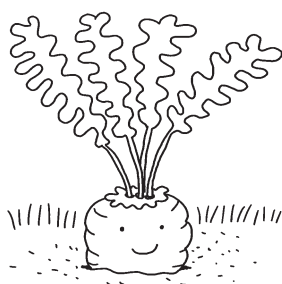
Did You Know?

Most leftovers are safe to eat within 3–4 days if you refrigerate them right away. To extend the life of leftovers, freeze them. Label the container with the date you place it in the freezer. Not sure whether something is still good? When in doubt, throw it out!

Just for fun

Q: I am orange, and I grow in dirt. I can be in a cake or eaten for a snack. What am I?

A: A carrot!



Master meal planning

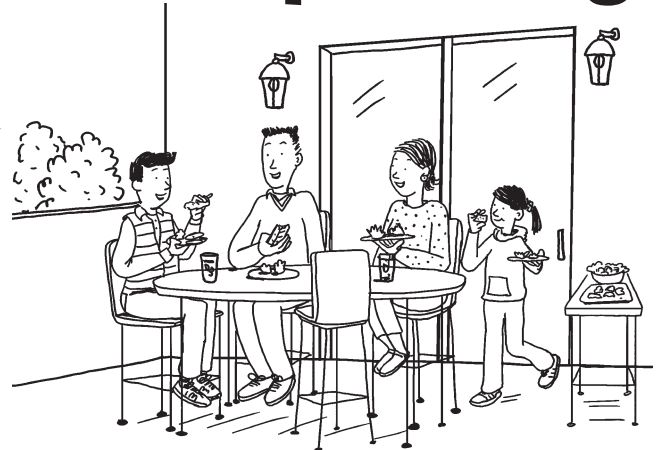
Having a plan for what your family will eat can make for a smoother week—and ensure healthier meals. Try these strategies to involve your teen and get started.

Make it affordable

Teach your child to plan meals around what you have in the house plus what’s on sale at the store. He might scan the pantry and fridge and see that you have hamburger buns, a green pepper, and an onion. If he finds coupons for ground turkey and tomato sauce, maybe he’ll suggest sloppy joes.

Make it easy

Cut down on the decision making—and add a dose of fun—by letting your child come up with weekly “specials.” Perhaps he’ll decide on “Finger-Food Friday” and “Soup-er Saturday.” And be flexible. If you need to make sandwiches on a busy day instead of the



eggplant parmesan you planned, simply move that dinner to tomorrow.

Make it organized

Have your teen keep a spreadsheet to help with meal planning. He could organize it by week, with dinner options for each day. Or he could set it up by category, with links to recipes for starters, entrées, sides, and desserts. He might even add a tab for grocery lists. *Tip:* Encourage him to use a free file-sharing site and invite family members to view and edit the spreadsheet. ♥

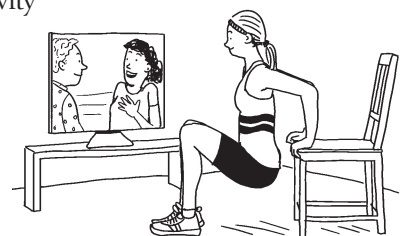
Less screen time, more active time

Electronics often compete with physical activity for your child’s free time. Motivate her to sit less and move more with these strategies.

Set limits. Have your teen reduce the time she spends on her phone by setting an alarm or using an app. When time’s up, she could ride her bike or take a walk.

Watch on the move. No need to sit still in front of the TV! Your child might do chair dips or run on a treadmill while watching her favorite shows.

Join your child. Challenge everyone in the family to learn popular social media dances. Find videos on YouTube, practice, and go offline for a family dance-off! ♥



Snacks for family night

Skip the candy and chips the next time your family watches a movie or plays games. Instead, your teen can make these tasty and nutritious snacks to munch on.

Movie night—spiced right. Prepare air-popped popcorn, and encourage your child to add healthy toppings instead of butter. She might make “pizza popcorn” with olive oil, oregano, and red pepper flakes. Or she could sprinkle popcorn with low-sodium taco seasoning for a Mexican flair. Then, instead of candy, make blueberry yogurt



bark. She can spread 2 cups nonfat Greek yogurt on a rimmed parchment-lined baking sheet, top with 1 cup blueberries, and freeze 3–4 hours. Cut into squares for a sweet, creamy treat.

Game-night munch and crunch. Let your teen set out a dip trio: guacamole, salsa, and hummus. She can serve with celery and carrot sticks, cucumber slices, and red bell pepper spears. Or suggest baseball-themed treats. She can make “bats” by dipping one end of whole-grain pretzel rods into melted dark chocolate and

placing on wax paper. Before the chocolate sets, she could add a marshmallow “baseball” to the tip of each bat. Refrigerate until chocolate hardens. ♥



PARENT TO PARENT Managing a soy allergy

After our daughter Tanisha was diagnosed with a soy allergy, we were surprised to learn just how many foods contain soy. No wonder she hadn't been feeling well!

Together, we read labels to find out what contains soy. It was obvious that it would be in soy sauce, but we also saw it in vegetable broth and even in her favorite breakfast cereal. And we discovered that she'll need to avoid tofu, edamame, miso broth, and bean sprouts, among other things.



Now we're learning to make our own soy-free versions of Tanisha's favorite Chinese dishes. She recently found a teriyaki sauce without soy and a replacement for soy sauce called coconut aminos. It has been an adjustment for her, but she's discovering that she enjoys cooking—and that's helping her learn to cope with her allergy. ♥

ACTIVITY CORNER Let's plant a garden

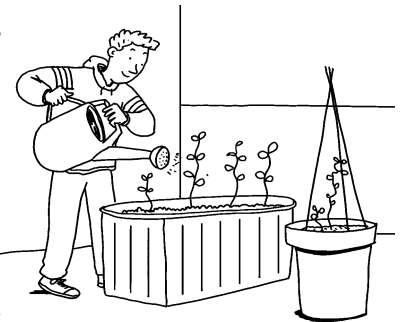
With lots of digging, lifting, and squatting, gardening can be an active hobby for your tween or teen. And if he plants vegetables and herbs, the whole family will reap healthy and yummy rewards.

Where? Section off a part of your yard. No yard? No problem. Try pots and container gardens, or look into getting a space in a community garden.

What? Suggest that he have fun by planting a garden based on a favorite food. Some ideas to get him started:

- Salsa garden: Roma tomatoes, cilantro, jalapenos, onions
- Salad garden: lettuce, radishes, cucumbers, cherry tomatoes
- Soup garden: peas, carrots, potatoes, parsley

How? Put your child in charge of researching each crop, monitoring for weeds, setting a schedule for watering, and checking for ripe produce to harvest. ♥



In the Kitchen Rotisserie chicken recipes

Shred the meat from a store-bought rotisserie chicken, and you've done half the work of making dinner! Your teen can whip up these healthy dishes.

Sweet chicken salad

Whisk together $\frac{1}{2}$ cup nonfat Greek yogurt and 1 tbsp. each lemon juice and honey. Combine with 3 cups chicken, 1 chopped apple, and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup diced celery. Serve in lettuce wraps.

BBQ stuffed potatoes

Bake 4 sweet potatoes at 375° for 1 hour. Mix 2 cups chicken, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup barbecue sauce, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup diced red

onion, and 1 cup shredded cheddar cheese. Split potatoes and divide the mixture evenly among them. Bake 15 minutes more.

Buffalo chicken flatbread

Toss 2 cups chicken with $\frac{1}{4}$ cup hot sauce, 1 diced red bell pepper, and 2 sliced green onions. Brush a premade pizza crust with olive oil.

Top with the chicken mixture and 1 cup shredded mozzarella cheese. Bake at 450° for 10–12 minutes, or 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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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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