

Teen Food & Fitness

Healthy Ideas for Middle and High School Students

December 2020

Gonzales Independent School District

FAST TAKES



"Green" gifts

Reusable cloth or canvas grocery bags can double as gift bags—and inspire your teen to give healthy foods as presents. She could put ingredients for a healthy dish into a bag and attach the recipe card. Or she might fill a bag with hot cocoa packets and add a jar of cinnamon sticks and a mug.



Did You Know?

Watching the clock may make workouts seem longer than they are.

Instead of staring at how much time is left in a fitness video, your teen could focus on the instructor. Or if he's on a treadmill, suggest that he cover the timer with a towel and concentrate on his music playlist.

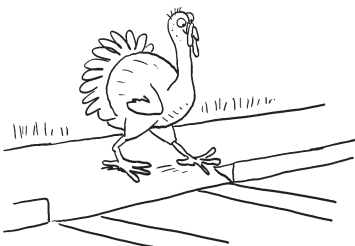
Food pantry tips

If your family uses food pantries, plan ahead. First, ask your child to make a list of nutritious foods to look for, such as fresh and frozen produce, lean meat, and whole-wheat bread. Then, arrive early for the best selection. Also, go to pantries *before* the grocery store so you won't have to buy foods you could have found at the pantry.

Just for fun

Q: Why did the turkey cross the road?

A: It was the chicken's day off!



Have a healthy holiday

For many people, the holiday season will look a little different this year. Regardless of your family's plans, you can eat nutritious foods and stay active with these tips.

Serve smaller portions

Tiny treats are festive—and they help with portion control. Suggest that your teen make single-serving foods like mini loaded baked potatoes. Roast baby potatoes in the oven, slit the tops, and stuff with plain nonfat Greek yogurt and chives. Or he could cook mini crustless quiches in a muffin tin.

Prep now, bake later

Instead of baking dozens of cookies at once, your tween or teen might prepare and freeze dough to bake—and decorate—on demand. That way, he won't be tempted by too many freshly baked cookies at once. Have him form dough into a cylinder, chill it in the



refrigerator, then slice and freeze. Or he could shape dough into balls to keep in the freezer and bake a few at a time.

Be active together

Bundle up and take the festivities outside—even if you're not getting together with all your relatives this year. Your child can set a date and pick a distance for relatives to run or walk in their own neighborhoods. When everyone finishes, celebrate with a virtual chat. *Tip:* Add extra fun by sharing an upbeat playlist for participants to listen to and wearing festive hats or "ugly sweaters." ♥

Exercise for mental health

To boost your tween's mental health this season—and all year long—encourage her to move her body. Here's why.

● **Improves mood.** Regular moderate-to-vigorous exercise lowers your child's risk of depression. Suggest that she bike or do aerobics for at least 30 minutes three times per week.

● **Reduces stress.** A quick workout can immediately lessen stress. If your teenager is nervous about an upcoming test or presentation, she might take a brisk walk or do yoga during study breaks or before school.

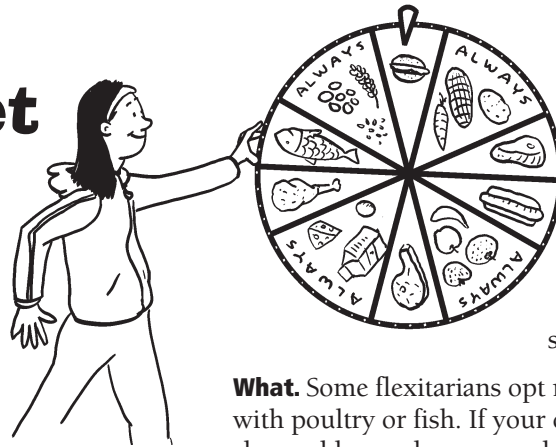
● **Improves body image.** Exercise lets your teen focus on what she can do rather than how she looks. In a notebook, she could track accomplishments like doing five push-ups in a row or being able to touch her toes. ♥



Options for a flexitarian diet

Is your teen interested in becoming a vegetarian but not ready to give up meat altogether? Or would she simply like to eat meat less often? Suggest that she consider one or more of these “rules” for embracing a middle ground.

When. Your child could consider going vegetarian on weekdays, then eat small



portions of meat if she wants to on weekends, holidays, and other special occasions.

Where. Your teen might stick to vegetarian dishes when your family cooks at home. For takeout or at restaurants, she may order a grilled chicken sandwich or fish tacos.

What. Some flexitarians opt not to eat red meat but are okay with poultry or fish. If your child wants to follow this rule, she could swap lean ground turkey for beef in burgers and cook salmon instead of steak.

How. Maybe your teen will decide to avoid actual servings of meat but not worry about whether a soup contains chicken broth or pinto beans were prepared with bacon fat. ♡

PARENT TO PARENT

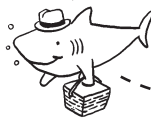
Why fiber?

My daughter Camille was complaining of stomachaches, so I took her to the doctor. The pediatrician said she may not be getting enough fiber and explained that it's important for proper digestion. He sent us home with some suggestions for eating more fiber.

For example, Camille wasn't eating much fruit other than bananas and applesauce, and it turns out they're both low in fiber. So now Camille slices her daily banana onto whole-wheat cereal, since whole grains have lots of fiber. Or she'll eat an actual apple instead of applesauce. We also learned that beans are a good source of fiber, so we've been eating more chili and rice-and-bean bowls.



Camille is feeling better most days. And she's discovered an added benefit of fiber: It keeps her full longer, so she's less tempted to eat junk food between meals. ♡



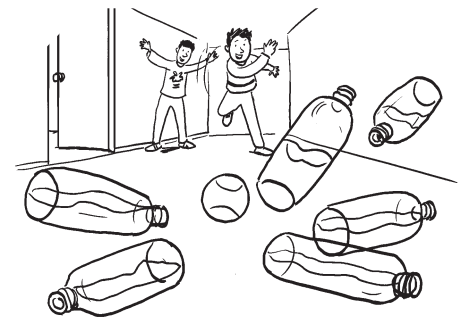
ACTIVITY CORNER

Hallway bowling alley

Build your teen's hand-eye coordination and encourage active play by letting him bowl in the comfort of your own home.

● **Set up.** Have your child collect 10 empty plastic bottles, fill them halfway with water, and arrange them at one end of a hallway like regular bowling pins.

● **Play.** On each turn, players get two chances to knock down the pins by rolling a tennis ball. Keep score on paper—a little math will be required! If you get a spare (topple all the pins in two tries), add 10 points to your next turn. For a strike (knock down all the pins on one attempt), earn 10 extra points on each of your next two turns. High score after 10 rounds wins. ♡



In the Kitchen

Winter stews

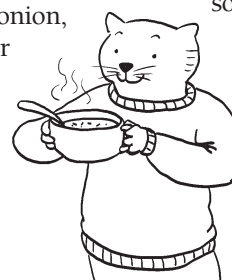
Cozy meets healthy with these nutritious meals that will warm up your entire family!

Coconut chickpea curry

Dice 1 red bell pepper and 1 onion, and sauté in 1 tbsp. olive oil over medium heat. Add 1 cup vegetable broth, 1 15-oz. can light coconut milk, 1 tbsp. curry powder, and 2 15-oz. cans chickpeas (drained, rinsed). Cook 20–30 minutes, until chickpeas are tender.

Chicken corn chowder

Thaw a 10-oz. package frozen corn, and puree in a blender with 2 cups non-fat milk. In a large pot, mix 2 cups low-sodium chicken broth, ½ tsp. onion powder, 2 cups cooked chicken, and another 10-oz. package thawed corn kernels. Stir in the pureed corn, and simmer for 20 minutes, until warmed through. ♡



OUR PURPOSE

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

Resources for Educators,
a division of CCH Incorporated
128 N. Royal Avenue • Front Royal, VA 22630
800-394-5052 • rfeustomer@wolterskluwer.com
www.rfeonline.com

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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