

Teen Food & Fitness

Healthy Ideas for Middle and High School Students

November 2019

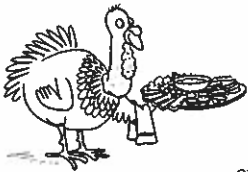
Gonzales Independent School District



FAST TAKES

Turkey-day appetizers

On Thanksgiving, let your tween set out healthy appetizers so everyone will be less likely to overeat at dinner. She can arrange a tray of raw veggies with pumpkin hummus. Or maybe you'll work together to make cranberry salsa or pumpkin spiced nuts.



Score a fitness touchdown

Fit in physical activity while your family watches football. Try these ideas. Do a victory dance each time your team scores. Suggest that your teen join the players by running in place as they run down the field. During commercials, he could walk up and down the stairs or hold 30-second plank poses.

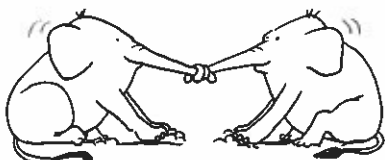
Did You Know?

Five percent of middle schoolers and 20 percent of high schoolers have tried vaping. Make sure your teen knows that e-cigs are illegal for children and contain highly addictive nicotine. Help her brainstorm ways to respond if friends pressure her to vape. She might say, "I don't want to get in trouble. I have a cheer competition this weekend."

Just for fun

Q: What game has the losers going forward and the winners going backward?

A: Tug-of-war.



Fast and healthy

A fast-food meal doesn't have to derail a healthy diet. Share these tips to help your teen make good choices when he grabs a quick meal.

Deconstruct a sandwich

Your teenager could turn his favorite sandwich into a salad. Rather than a foot-long sub, encourage him to order turkey and cheese on a bed of lettuce, then add extra vegetables like olives, bell peppers, onions, and pickles.

Go easy on the sauce

A cream-based sauce like ranch or blue cheese may double the fat and calories in your teen's fast-food meal. Suggest that he use mustard, relish, or marinara instead to liven up his meal without adding fat. Or he could ask for sauce on the side and drizzle on a small amount.

Create your own combo

Have your teenager put together his own combo meal. He can skip the main



dish and get an assortment of healthy sides like a plain baked potato, black beans, and apple slices—then round out the meal with water or fat-free milk.

Idea: Your teen could order a kids' meal so he eats a smaller portion.

Think secret menu

Let your teenager know it's okay to ask for items that aren't actually on the menu. Maybe he will request tomato slices or find out whether the yogurt that's sold during breakfast is available for lunch. ●

Workouts to fit your personality

Your tween's personality could be the key to finding an activity she enjoys and will stick with. Consider these workouts tailored to her.

Outgoing? Group fitness classes and team sports may be the ticket for more extroverted tweens. She might try a dance fitness class or join a volleyball team.

Reserved? If your child tends to be introverted, perhaps she'd prefer a quiet activity that allows personal space. *Examples:* swimming, yoga, running.

Easily bored? Your tween could consider interval or circuit training where she'll go from one high-energy exercise to the next in minutes. ●



The three Cs of food safety

An important part of healthy eating is keeping food fresh and safe. When you're in the kitchen with your teen, point out these rules for storing and preparing food.

Chill. Refrigerate perishables like raw meat, eggs, and cut-up fruits and vegetables quickly. Also, teach your teenager to thaw and marinate meats in the refrigerator—not on the counter.



Clean. Have your teen wipe counters with a cleaning solution before and after cooking. Remind her to wash her hands in warm soapy water before handling food and right after touching raw meat or eggs. *Note:* Don't rinse meats, since that may increase the spread of bacteria in your kitchen.

Check. Show your teenager how to use a meat thermometer by sticking it in the thickest part of meat or poultry. Explain that she must cook ground beef to 160° and poultry to 165°. No thermometer? She can stick a fork in the meat—the juices should run clear. ●

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ACTIVITY CORNER

Jump, jump, hooray!

Jumping rope isn't just for kids! Professional boxers use it as part of their training routine. Encourage your teenager to add it to his fitness routine, too, with these exercises. He'll work on balance and get his heart rate up.

- **Single leg.** Jump with one foot at a time. Try 5 jumps on one foot, and then switch to 5 on the other. Or alternate legs on every other jump.
- **Double time.** Swing the rope under your feet twice before landing.



- **Criss-cross.** As you bring the rope over your head, cross your arms in front of your body. After you jump over the rope, uncross your arms. ●

PARENT TO PARENT

Meals are for eating, not texting

My daughter Tiffany often wants to be on her phone while she's eating. Not only do I prefer she talk to us, I worry the distraction will make her eat more. In fact, I had a habit of working through lunch and realized I needed a break from the screen—plus, I was overeating because I wasn't paying attention.



Now that I take an actual lunch break, I'm more productive at work. I wanted to limit multitasking when we eat at home too. It will allow us to spend better time together as a family and may also teach Tiffany to be more mindful of what she's eating.

And it worked. Now that we are talking to each other and enjoying meals instead of eating with phones at the table, we leave feeling satisfied—not stuffed—and more connected as a family. ●

In the Kitchen

Scrambled egg hacks

Your teen can get creative with scrambled eggs. Share this foolproof basic recipe, and then suggest he stir in healthy additions during or after scrambling his eggs.

During:

- Add up to $\frac{1}{4}$ cup fresh or frozen (thawed) corn kernels to the eggs for a hint of sweetness in every bite.
- Swirl in a spoonful of pesto for fun and flavorful "green eggs."

How to scramble eggs

1. Spray a skillet with nonstick cooking spray over low to medium-low heat.
2. Whisk the eggs, and pour them into the hot skillet.
3. Stir the eggs in a figure-eight pattern until cooked, about 2–3 minutes.

After:

- Pump up the protein and creaminess by stirring in 1 tbsp. cottage cheese per egg.
- Mix eggs with your favorite salsa for a spicy kick. If your teen is a fan of ketchup on his eggs, this is a healthier alternative. ●



OUR PURPOSE

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

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