

Teen Food & Fitness

Healthy Ideas for Middle and High School Students

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FAST TAKES

Swap out soda

Bottomless soda refills may sound appealing to the pocket-book, but the empty calories add up fast. When eating out, suggest your tween or teen drink water or seltzer instead of soda. To add flavor, she could ask for a lime or lemon wedge to squeeze into it.



Sign up for PE

Encourage your teen to sign up for gym classes every semester even if he has completed his PE graduation credits. Gym class is a great way to get exercise, relieve stress, and break up the school day. Have him check the course catalog—many schools offer a variety of PE classes beyond the basics, such as strength training, badminton, swimming, basketball, and more.

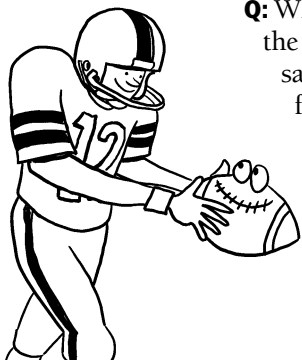
Did You Know?

Type 2 diabetes is on the rise among teens, and more than 90 percent with the condition are overweight or obese. The disease makes it difficult to control blood sugar levels and often requires dietary changes and injections. To lower the risk of developing diabetes, encourage your children to eat nutritiously and exercise regularly.

Just for fun

Q: What did the football say to the football player?

A: I get a kick out of you!



Family meals: A priority

Dinnertime offers a chance for your family to reconnect and enjoy a healthy meal. While it may not be possible to have dinner together every night, these ideas will get your kids to the table more often.

Consider timing

Each week, review your schedules and plot out what times will work best. If work and activity schedules conflict too much, you might try weekday breakfast or weekend brunch or lunch instead. The important thing is not *when* you eat together, but *that* you eat together! *Tip:* Post your mealtimes where they're easy to see all week long.

Divide meals in half

Sometimes, teenagers have practices or activities in the evenings. Consider having part of the meal, like a salad, before your child leaves. Or if you're not home from work yet, he could have that part on his own. Then, enjoy the main



course and vegetables together afterward. *Tip:* To keep from overeating with a two-part meal, use smaller plates.

Enjoy traditions

Make mealtime more meaningful by establishing fun family rituals. Maybe each person can report something good or funny that happened that day. Or take turns being the DJ and playing background music for everyone to enjoy. *Tip:* Once a month, plan a fancy meal to prepare and eat together by candlelight. ♥

There's no off-season for keeping fit

Is it off-season for your children's sports? Help them stay in shape with these ideas:

- Have your kids stick with workouts at the same times they had practices. But rather than reporting to the gym or field, they can do cross-training like riding bikes or following a Pilates video. *Idea:* Have them invite other team members to join in, too.
- Your children could use off-season time to work on improving skills. For example, soccer players might practice dribbling the ball around cones, while softball players may run sprints. Encourage them to ask their coaches for suggestions. ♥



More whole grains

Whole-grain cereal and whole-wheat bread are only two possibilities when it comes to eating more whole grains. Nudge your child toward a healthier diet with these tips.

Why? Whole grains contain nutrients and antioxidants, and the fiber will help her feel fuller. The goal? About 5–8 ounces of grains a day, with at least half of them being whole grains. *Note:* One ounce = 1 bread slice or ½ cup pasta or rice.

What? Have your teen google whole grains and print a list for reference. When shopping or eating out, she'll want to look for words like *oatmeal*, *whole rye*, and *barley*. On food packages, ingredients are listed from most to least, so whole grains



should be first or second. *Note:* “Multigrain” doesn’t necessarily indicate whole grain—it just means the food includes more than one grain.

How? Together, think of ways to use more whole grains. For instance, replace white rice with brown rice in side dishes. Toss farro or barley into soups or stews as they cook (add more water or stock since the grains will soak up liquid). Experiment with varieties like millet, bulgur wheat, or buckwheat. Let your child choose a new whole grain each week—recipes are often right on the package. ♡

Q & A Keep track of your eating

Q: My son Sam said his health teacher recommended that students keep track of their food to help stay at a healthy weight. What are good ways to do this?

A: He might write in a small notebook he keeps in his pocket, or he could text himself when he eats. Also, smartphone apps like *MyFitnessPal* or online trackers like supertracker.usda.gov may appeal to him.

Then, encourage Sam to use his tracking information to adjust his habits. Maybe he'll notice a pattern of choosing junk food after school, and he can be on guard to make healthier choices at that time. Or if he finds he snacks right after dinner, he may realize it's out of habit, not hunger.

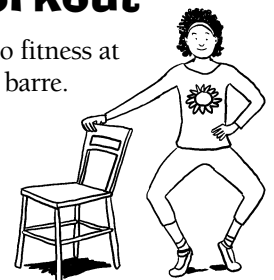
Another tip: He can record the food (and amount) right before he eats instead of afterward, so he thinks about his food choices first! ♡



ACTIVITY CORNER

Ballet-inspired workout

Help your tween “dance” her way to fitness at home by using a chair back as a ballet barre.



Leg lifts

Stand with both hands resting on the chair back. Lift your right leg back, toes pointed (left leg straight, knee slightly bent). Hold briefly, and return to the ground. Repeat 10 times on each leg.

Pliés

Put your hand on the chair back, and bring your heels together with feet pointed out. Raise your heels, bend your knees over your toes, and lower yourself about half-way down. Straighten your legs, and lower back down. Work up to 15–30 reps.

Arm raises

Place your left hand on the chair back and your right arm stretched out in front of you, palm up and elbow gently bent (almost like you're holding a big beach ball). Move your right arm to the side and above your head, then back to start. Repeat 12 times, and switch sides. ♡

In the Kitchen

Twists on tuna

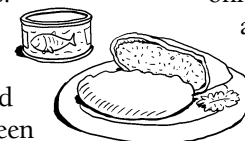
Canned tuna is a convenient way to add more heart-healthy fish to your family's diet. Try these recipes with tuna packed in water.

Winter salad. Combine a 5-oz. can drained tuna with 1 diced celery stalk, ½ diced apple, 2 tbsp. dried cranberries, 1 tsp. Dijon mustard, and 2 tbsp. light mayonnaise. Serve on salad greens.

Perfect pitas. Drain 2 cans (5 oz. each) tuna and 1 can (15 oz.) white beans. Mix with 10 quartered cherry tomatoes, 4 thinly sliced green

onions, ½ tbsp. olive oil, 1 tsp. Italian spice mix, and 1½ tbsp. lemon juice. Divide among 4 whole-wheat pitas.

Squash melts. Split 2 yellow squash lengthwise, scoop out the seeds, and brush with olive oil. Bake 15 minutes at 400°. Mix 1 can tuna (5 oz., drained), 1 minced celery stalk, 2 tbsp. minced red onion, 2 tbsp. lemon juice, and ¼ tsp. dried dill. Spoon into squash, and top with ½ cup grated Parmesan. Broil 2–3 minutes. ♡



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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