Teen Food & Fitness™
Healthy Ideas for Middle and High School Students
January 2019

FAST TAKES

Breakfast for dinner

Switch things up on busy school nights with a family "brinner," or breakfast for dinner. Try whole-grain waffles topped with scrambled eggs and diced tomatoes for a filling main dish. Complete the meal with sauteed apple slices sprinkled with cinnamon.

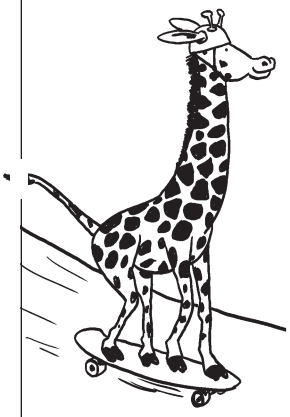
Did You Know?

Washing your hands is one of the best strategies for staying healthy. Remind your tween that it's especially important to wash up before eating or cooking and after going to the bathroom. He should use hot water and scrub with plenty of soap.

PE every semester

Is your teen looking for a convenient way to fit in more exercise? Encourage her to sign up for PE when she picks classes for next year—and every year. Working out with classmates can be a fun part of her day. Plus, she'll discover new activities to pursue outside of class.

Just for fun



Q: What has four legs, four wheels, a long neck, and spots?

A: A giraffe on a skateboard.

Make healthy habits stick!

The beginning of a new year is a great time to make healthy changes. Help your tween or teen resolve to eat better—and stick with it—using these ideas.

Start small

Suggest that your child tweak one aspect of her eating at a time. For example, she might decide to focus first on adding more vegetables, then on swapping in whole grains, and next on choosing more nutritious snacks.

Get specific

Rather than saying "I will eat more vegetables" or "I'll switch to whole grains," your tween could plan specific actions. Maybe she will eat one serving of vegetables at every meal or replace white bread with whole wheat for her sandwiches.

Be consistent

Help your teen make her resolutions part of her regular routine. If she wants to add more fruit to her diet, keep fruits like clementines and pears on hand. Or if she resolves to drink water instead of soda, give her a cute reusable water bottle to stash in her backpack.

Set up reminders

To keep the healthy habits on her mind, your tween could post reminders on the refrigerator ("Did you eat your veggies today?") or set phone alerts ("Grab fruit on your way out the door!"). *Tip:* Suggest that she team up with a friend. They can remind each other to stick to their resolutions.

Mark your calendar

A personal fitness calendar can motivate your teen to stay active. Here's how he could set up and use one.

Design it. Start by printing out a free calendar from the internet, or look for one at the dollar store. For each day he's active, he can mark the date (blue sticker for push-ups, a heart symbol for jogging).

Review it. Encourage your teenager to glance back at his calendar after each week and month. Has he been as active as he'd hoped? What activities did he do most often? He'll see what he likes best and how far he's come—and this will help him set goals.

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How to limit added sugars

Some foods, such as fruit, are naturally sweet *and* healthy. But when sugar is added to a food, it adds calories without any nutritional benefits. Share these tips with your tween for reading food packaging and avoiding unnecessary sweeteners.

- **Know synonyms.** "Added sugar" won't appear in a list of ingredients. Teach your child to spot synonyms, such as *molasses*, *syrup*, *nectar*, and words ending in *ose* (*sucrose*, *fructose*, *dextrose*). These are all forms of sugar.
- **Look for amounts.** Some labels tell your tween how much added sugar is in one serving, while others list the total amount of sugar—natural *and* added—in the serving. Your child should have fewer than 25 grams (6 tsp.) of added sugar per day.

Note: Explain to your tween that it's important to check foods he doesn't think of as sweet. For example, many bottled salad dressings and jarred pasta sauces contain added sugar. Encourage him to choose the variety with the least amount.

ACTIVITY CORNER Fitness-ball moves

A playground-style rubber ball is an inexpensive fitness tool. Have your teenager find one about the size of a basketball, and she can try these two exercises.

1. Twist and touch. Sit on the floor with your knees bent and heels on the ground, and lean backward slightly. With your arms straight, hold the ball above your knees and twist from side to side, touching the ball to the floor next to your knees each time. Work up to 3 sets of 10 repetitions each.

2. Leg lifts. On a kitchen chair, sit with your feet flat on the ground. Put the ball between your calves, and hold onto the seat. Raise and straighten your legs so they're parallel to the floor. Squeeze for 5 seconds, holding the ball in place, and lower your feet to the floor. Do 3 sets of 10 reps.

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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Q&A Work toward a healthy weight

Q: *My son wants to lose a few pounds. How can I help him?*

A: First, talk to your son's pediatrician about whether he actually needs to lose weight. If he does, rather than focusing on dieting, help your child eat healthy meals and snacks in moderation.

Encourage him to eat breakfast every day. A morning meal will fill him up and make him less likely to overeat later. Also, have him eat at home as often as possible, since restaurants often serve large portions that are high in fat and calories. And avoid keeping junk food like soda and chips in the house.

Finally, consider joining him on his quest to eat better, regardless of whether you need to lose weight. Making it a family affair will motivate your son—and help everyone be healthier.

In the Kitchen Recipes in a mug

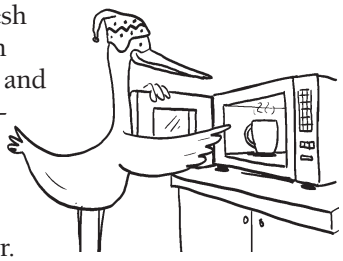
Your teen can make these hot and tasty mug recipes in mere minutes!

Cup o' lasagna

Break 2 uncooked lasagna noodles to fit into a mug. Add $\frac{3}{4}$ cup water, and microwave 3–4 minutes. Drain, and remove pasta. Put 1 tbsp. marinara sauce in the mug. Layer pasta pieces with 2 tbsp. marinara, 2 tbsp. ricotta cheese, and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup fresh spinach. Repeat. Finish with 1 tbsp. each marinara sauce and shredded mozzarella. Microwave 2–$2\frac{1}{2}$ minutes.

Chicken "pot pie"

Melt $\frac{1}{2}$ tbsp. butter in a mug, and stir in 1 tbsp. flour. Add $\frac{1}{4}$ cup frozen mixed vegetables, $\frac{1}{3}$ cup chopped cooked chicken, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup skim milk, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup low-sodium chicken broth, and salt and pepper to taste. Microwave 2 minutes, stirring every 30 seconds until thickened.

Cheesy omelet

Lightly spray a mug with nonstick cooking spray. Crack 2 eggs into the mug, and whisk with 1 tbsp. nonfat milk. Stir in 1 tbsp. shredded cheese, and 2 tbsp. chopped bell pepper. Microwave 1–$1\frac{1}{2}$ minutes, until set.