



FAST TAKES

Exercise for happiness

When your teen works out, her mind and body are getting a boost. Chemicals released in the brain during exercise can improve her mood. Plus, she'll feel a sense of accomplishment when she finishes. Last but not least, regular workouts are likely to help her feel better about her appearance, too.

Did You Know?

A little muscle soreness can be a good thing.



When your youngster's muscles are pushed to the point of tiredness (perhaps after a long basketball practice), they actually become stronger. *Tip:*

Staying hydrated can help ease soreness, so remind him to take a water bottle along.

A bite of chocolate

Eating small amounts of chocolate is a healthy way to have a treat. Dark chocolate contains antioxidants that can help protect the heart. But chocolate that has been overly processed, like in candy bars, won't have this same benefit (and it will have added fat!). *Best choice:* an occasional 1-oz. square of dark chocolate that has at least 70 percent cocoa solids.

Just for fun

Q: What's the hardest thing about learning to roller-skate?

A: The ground.



Fairfield Public Schools
Joann Fitzpatrick, Manager, Food & Nutrition Services

Planning dinners

Dinnertime can be hectic. Make mealtimes easier by having ingredients and recipes ready to go. The two big bonuses? You'll save money because you won't be eating out, and your family will be more likely to eat healthier foods.



Map out meals

Decide what dinners you'll be having a week at a time. You might want to choose a day at the beginning of the week to sit down together and go through meal ideas. *Note:* Keep a folder with your weekly meal plans so you can reuse menus and recipes. Let your teen star his favorites.

Shop smart

One key to making healthy meals is having the right food on hand. You can use grocery store flyers to help you figure out menus and save money. Are pork chops on sale this week? Consider making grilled pork chops one night and

buying extra to put in the freezer. *Try this:* Ask your child to clip newspaper coupons and organize them for easy use in the store.

Cook for later

Save time by cooking for two meals instead of just one. For example, bake extra chicken. Then, you can serve it with a salad one night, and the next night cut it into strips and mix with sautéed peppers on a whole-wheat tortilla for tasty fajitas. Or double casserole recipes and freeze half for another time. ♥

Got braces?

If your child wears braces, eating may be more difficult. Share these suggestions for nutritious foods that won't break her braces:

- Watch out for hard foods. Bagels, crusty breads, nuts, pretzels, popcorn, and crunchy vegetables like carrots or celery can loosen brackets. Consider softer options like cucumbers, sliced whole-wheat bread, and steamed vegetables.
- Bite carefully. Some hard foods might be okay if she doesn't bite with her front teeth. Your teen could bite into sandwiches from the side of her mouth, cut corn from the cob, or slice up apples and pears.
- Avoid sticky foods. The good news is that certain junk foods, like gooey caramels, jelly beans, licorice, and many other candies, are off limits for braces.



Note: Talk to the expert. Your child's orthodontist will have a list of foods to eat and foods to avoid. ♥

Help for picky eaters

It's not unusual for kids to want to stick to familiar foods. If your child is always eating the same things, she might not be getting a balanced diet. These tips might nudge her toward new foods.

1. Sample one at a time. Instead of cooking a whole new meal, think about using just one new ingredient at a time. For example, if you know your teen likes macaroni and cheese, try mixing in cut-up



fresh spinach. Or serve a new fish entrée on top of her favorite rice.

2. Keep at it. Researchers say it can take up to 15 tries before your child discovers she enjoys something new. Go ahead and serve foods again (and again!) even if your teen said she didn't like it before.

Tip: You might try preparing it different ways. For instance, microwave asparagus one time, stir asparagus pieces into scrambled eggs another time, and the next time sprinkle asparagus with Parmesan and broil.

3. Start small. A big pile of black beans might seem overwhelming to your child. Put a small amount on her plate so she doesn't feel pressed to eat a lot if she doesn't like it. Or offer small bowls for tasting a new food. *Note:* If she sees you eating something, she might be convinced to give it a try, too. ♡

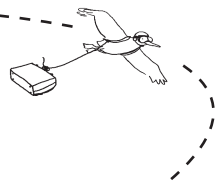
PARENT TO PARENT Team tryouts

When my daughter didn't make the soccer team last year, she was crushed. But after talking to the coach—with a little encouragement from me—she found out what she needed to do to improve.

The coach said Kimberly showed potential but needed to strengthen her kicking and dribbling skills. He recommended a nearby skills training program. My daughter signed up for a session and then continued the drills on her own once the program ended.

We got a soccer net at a garage sale and keep it in the yard—most afternoons she's out there for at least a little while practicing. Sometimes she has friends over, and they practice taking shots against each other or play pickup games.

Since focusing on specific areas where she can improve, my daughter feels more ready for tryouts this year. I don't know if she'll make the team, but I know she has learned a good lesson about not giving up. ♡



In the Kitchen Sip a smoothie

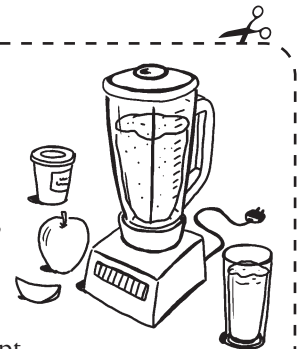
Break out the blender to whip up these good-for-your-teen drinks. Each recipe makes two servings, the perfect excuse to sip and chat together.

Citrus wake-up. Pulse together 1 cup mango chunks and 2 cups orange juice until the fruit is broken into small pieces. Spoon in a container of nonfat yogurt, and blend until smooth. *Bonus:* Orange juice and mangoes contain plenty of vitamin C—which can fend off colds.

Tropical blast. Puree 1 14-oz. can light coconut milk, 2 cups frozen

strawberries, and 1 14-oz. can pineapple, including the juice. *Note:* These ingredients can be kept on hand to make smoothies anytime.

Apple burst. Blend 2 cups ice cubes and 2 cups apple juice until the mixture is slushy. Mix in 2 apples (peeled and cut into chunks). Pulse again. *Tip:* This is a perfect way to use up apples with bruises. ♡

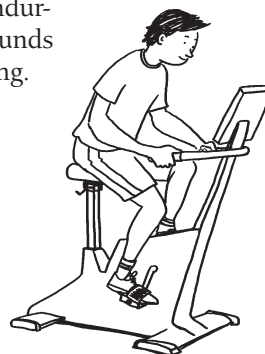


ACTIVITY CORNER Interval training

To improve your child's workout, suggest that he add short bursts of high intensity to his routine. This method, called interval training, builds endurance and can help shed extra pounds faster than evenly paced exercising. Here are some ideas:

- Mix up the speed. For example, your teen could walk for three minutes and sprint for one minute (and repeat). If he's running on a track, he might run one of every four laps at sprint speed.

- Run hills. Suggest that he alternate running on flat ground and doing hills. On a treadmill, he can raise or lower the incline level every few minutes.



- Bike faster. After warming up, your child can do intervals by pedaling as quickly as possible for 30 seconds and then resuming his regular pace. If he's on a stationary bike, he might increase the resistance or pedal very fast for short spurts. ♡

OUR PURPOSE

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

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