

Teen Food & Fitness

Healthy Ideas for Middle and High School Students

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Fairfield Public Schools
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FAST TAKES



A banana a day

Bananas are a kid favorite—and a nutrient powerhouse. They're packed with potassium and magnesium,

which promote a healthy heart and healthy bones. They're also an excellent source of fiber. Encourage your teen or tween to snack on bananas or add them to smoothies.



Bend for health

Squats are a great way for your child to work her legs, back, and stomach muscles. Here's how: Standing with legs a little farther than hip-width apart, bend both knees. Then, squat down into a deep sitting position. Return to a standing position. Work up to doing 10–12 squats at a time.

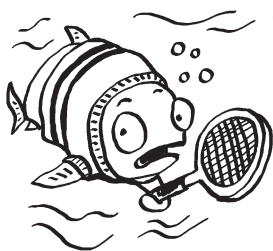
Did You Know?

Bicycle accidents happen most often close to home. Tell your teen or tween that he has to wear his helmet whenever he rides his bike. *Tip:* Point out that professional cyclists always wear helmets. Also, you can set a good example by wearing one yourself. While you're at it, go ahead and take a ride together!

Just for fun

Q: Why don't fish play tennis?

A: They're afraid they'll get caught in the net.



Sports nutrition

Fuel your child's interest in sports by helping her choose foods that will give her energy. Knowing what kinds of foods to eat—and when—can mean the difference between feeling sluggish and being ready to play. Here's how.

Breakfast boost

Your youngster's body needs to be recharged in the morning, especially on the day of a game or practice. A combination of protein and carbohydrates will help. For a quick breakfast, suggest that she put 1 cup of nonfat yogurt in a bowl, swirl in $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of whole-grain cereal, and add fruit.

Pre-exercise eating

A full stomach plus rigorous activity can lead to indigestion. Explain to your child that larger meals are okay 3–4 hours before exercising. But she should have a lighter meal several hours pre-workout. *Tip:* Small, non-sugary snacks are fine right before a workout because they offer a bit of quick energy.



Post-workout foods

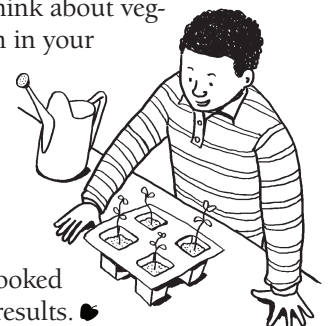
After exercising, your teen will most likely be hungry. Just as proteins and carbohydrates can jump-start her day, they will also help her body replenish energy and rebuild muscle tissue. Encourage her to try nuts or milk and whole-wheat toast with peanut butter.

Note: Remind your child to stay hydrated while exercising. Experts suggest 2–3 cups of water a few hours before, $\frac{1}{2}$ –1 cup of water every 20 minutes during, and another 2–3 cups right after working out. ♡

Plant a garden

Growing vegetables can teach your youngster important lessons about healthy living, and it can be fun! Try these steps:

1. Together, go to a local nursery to find out what plants grow best in your climate and pick out seeds and plants. Let your teen think about vegetables he enjoys eating and see if they can be grown in your area. *Note:* Many varieties will do best if you start them indoors in small clay pots or paper cups.
2. Make gardening part of your child's schedule. For example, he might work in the garden after school each day or weed after dinner.
3. Eat what you grow. Let your teen help you plan how to use the vegetables in a meal. He might get hooked on gardening when he's able to see (and taste!) the results. ♡



Screen time

From TV and video games to computers, handheld devices, and cell phones, many teens are spending more than four hours a day in front of a screen. Try these ideas to help your teenager turn some of his screen time into active time.

Take exercise breaks. Before your child starts playing a video game, suggest that he do a set of sit-ups or bicep curls. Then, he can take “activity breaks” every time he completes a level (or every 20 minutes) and run in place. If he’s watching TV, he can switch to an exercise video during commercials or see how many push-ups or jumping jacks he can do before his program comes back on.



Track fitness online. Have him use a free calendar program (at Google or Yahoo, for example) to create his own activity log. Then, he can enter the physical activity he does each day, along with the number of minutes spent on it.

Idea: Have an “unplugged day.” Choose one day a week that’s tech-free, and enjoy some active fun as a family. You might go bowling or just play catch in the yard. Your youngster may grumble at first, but over time he may learn that he likes to take a break from the screen. ♥



Q & A Vitamins and supplements

Q: I’m not sure if my teen is getting enough nutrients in his diet. Should he be taking a vitamin supplement?

A: Your teenager’s body needs plenty of vitamins to grow. But ideally, he should be taking in most of his vitamins from a well-balanced diet instead of a supplement. Choosing a variety of low-fat dairy products and proteins along with fruits, vegetables, and whole grains should provide all the vitamins he needs.

Together, look at the Food Pyramid (www.mypyramid.gov) to see the number of servings he should be having daily from each food group. Then, ask him to write down the servings he actually has for a week. He can see how his diet stacks up and changes he might need to make. Before using any type of vitamin supplement, be sure to ask his doctor, the school nurse, or a nutritionist. ♥

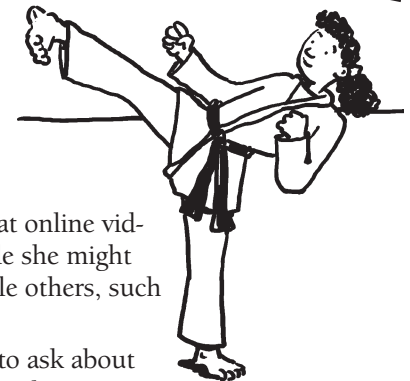


ACTIVITY CORNER

Martial arts

Martial arts can improve more than your teen’s muscles. With a focus on discipline and concentration, her confidence can soar as she moves from belt to belt. Share these suggestions:

- Consider different types. Have your child look at online videos or visit nearby classes to figure out which style she might like. Some, like karate, involve more kicking, while others, such as t’ai chi, are about smooth movements.
- Take a class. Call your local community center to ask about free or discounted classes in your area. Many martial arts classes are designed for skill level rather than age, so you and your youngster could enjoy a class together.
- Think outside the gym. Some martial arts classes are offered outdoors at parks. If your teen enjoys natural settings, combining exercise and fresh air may be a perfect fit for her. ♥



In the Kitchen

4-3-2-1 Cook!

Healthy meals are a snap to make with these four-ingredient entrees. Each recipe makes four servings.

Veggies + meat + rice + teriyaki sauce = stir-fry. Cook rice. In a skillet or wok, stir-fry a 16-ounce bag of frozen vegetables with leftover meat (sliced pork or beef) and 1–2 tbsp. low-sodium teriyaki sauce. Serve over rice.

Lettuce + grapes + roasted chicken + vinaigrette = chicken salad. Place 1½ cups lettuce (romaine works well) and a few grapes on each plate. Top



with chicken pieces from a store-bought rotisserie chicken. Drizzle each serving with low-fat vinaigrette.

Pasta + broccoli + cheese + dressing = pasta salad. Cook 1 box pasta and microwave 2 cups broccoli florets. In a large bowl, toss together whole-wheat pasta, the broccoli, cheddar cheese cubes, and ½ cup low-fat ranch dressing. ♥

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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