

Teen Food & Fitness

Healthy Ideas for Middle and High School Students

December 2010



FAST TAKES

Alcohol and calories

Give your teens another reason to avoid underage drinking—talk to them about how it can affect their weight. Alcoholic drinks are packed with empty calories. Plus the body doesn't absorb alcohol the same way as food, so those calories are harder to burn. *Note:* Be sure to point out that drinking is never healthy for teens—and it's against the law.

Schedule in fitness

Squeezing in exercise time can be tough. Why not write it on your family calendar? *Example:* "Basketball with Matt at 7 p.m." By scheduling an activity, both you and your teen will have something to look forward to, and you're more likely to do it!

Did You Know?

Packed with antioxidants, cranberries may help prevent health problems like

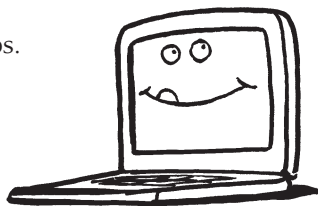


heart disease and cancer. Make the tart 100 percent cranberry juice more appealing by mixing it with apple juice or seltzer water with a squeeze of lime. Or buy the berries whole (stock up and freeze them now), and pop them into muffin or pancake batter.

Just for fun

Q: What do computers eat for snacks?

A: Chips.



Fairfield Public Schools
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Healthy holiday tips

Big meals, cookies, cakes—the holidays are full of reasons to eat just one more bite. To keep up your child's good eating habits, try these suggestions.

Prepare for parties

Encourage him to eat a satisfying meal before he goes out to avoid unhealthy snacking once he arrives. Also, you might offer to make a healthy treat for him to take along to share. A fresh, colorful veggie platter with a low-fat ranch dressing dip might look good compared to a spread of sugary foods.



Freeze sweets

Instead of keeping out all the goodies you bake or receive from friends, save some for later. Cookies, candies, and dessert breads can be wrapped and frozen for months. Explain to your teen that by storing sweets to eat once in a while, he'll feel better—and enjoy them more—than if he eats them all at once.

Think seasonally

Fruits like mandarin oranges are plentiful this month. Leave out bowls of easy-to-peel fruits, along with whole almonds

or walnuts with a nutcracker. Your teen will have to slow down to peel oranges or crack nuts. Taking time to eat foods makes it less likely that he'll overeat, because he'll be more aware of when he feels full.

Plan other activities

Together, think of holiday activities that don't revolve around food. For example, instead of a cookie exchange with neighbors, you might swap small gifts from the dollar store. Or take walks to see decorated houses rather than having a dessert party. ♥

Training in the off season

If your teen is part of a team, staying fit when there aren't any games or practices can be a challenge. Motivate her with these ideas for cross-training and skill-building during the off season:

- Try a new sport. Sure, your child may love soccer, but help her check out other options. Swimming can increase her endurance, and racquetball could boost her hand-eye coordination. Let her know that by exercising her muscles in new ways, she can improve in her main sport.
- Teach skills. Sometimes the best way to get better in sports is to teach someone else. Look for chances for your teenager to work with younger athletes at a nearby fitness or community center. She could also help a younger sibling, cousin, or neighbor with one-on-one instruction time in different sports. ♥



Choosing whole grains

You can find plenty of whole-grain products at grocery stores. But sometimes it can be tricky to convince your teen to choose these foods. Here are three ideas:

1. Talk about the difference. Your teen may not understand why whole grains are better for her. Explain that many of the grains' nutrients are stripped away in processed products like white bread or white rice. Whole-grain foods use all the grain seed for the most nutritional punch.



2. Sample more. Don't be surprised if your youngster doesn't enjoy certain whole-grain foods at first. It may take time—and variety—to discover what she likes. If whole-wheat bread seems boring or heavy to her, buy a hearty 15-grain loaf or soft oatmeal bread.

3. Mix it in. Use half white flour and half whole-wheat flour when you prepare baked goods. Or mix brown rice with white, gradually increasing the brown rice until your teen's used to the taste. Encourage her to blend ground flaxseed into yogurt or sprinkle it on breakfast cereal. She may find she likes the nutty flavor. ♥

ACTIVITY CORNER



Balancing act

Strong "core" muscles—those along the spine and abdomen—can help your teen have better posture, overall fitness, and balance. These exercises can help him strengthen his core.

● **One-legged lifts.** Stand with arms to the side, hold a light weight (palms forward) in each hand, and raise one leg. Slowly raise the weights almost to your shoulders, bending at the elbow. Gently bring hands back to the starting position. Repeat 5–10 times. Then, do 5–10 repetitions with the other leg raised.



● **Bicycle crunch.** Lie on your back with your legs bent and raised in the air. Your arms should be bent behind your neck so your fingertips just touch. Pull in your abdominal muscles as you raise your shoulder blades off the floor. Bring in your left knee as you twist your right elbow so they barely touch. Alternate sides, and repeat 10–15 times. ♥

In the Kitchen Chili, reinvented



Making a healthy pot of chili is a snap! With the yummy smells filling the air, your youngster will be eager for a bowl. Try these varieties.

Chicken chili. Cube 4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts. Place in a slow cooker along with 2 cans white beans (1 can drained and 1 can with liquid), 1 can diced tomatoes, 1 small can diced green chiles, 1 small diced onion, 1 tsp. cumin, 1 tsp. garlic powder, and ¼ tsp. cayenne pepper. Cook 5–8 hours on low heat or 3–4 on high.

Mix-it-up chili. Make your regular chili recipe (or find one at www.allrecipes.com) with ground chicken or turkey instead of higher-fat beef. Mix in vegetables like diced carrots,

zucchini, and bell pepper. Add variety with bean combinations such as black, navy, and pinto. *Tip:* Use more beans and vegetables, and less meat, to increase fiber and lower fat.

Potato chili. Cube 2 lbs. red potatoes (unpeeled to retain the nutrients). Place in a large pot with 2 cans kidney beans (drained), 1 can tomatoes with diced green chiles (undrained), 1 can corn (drained), 1 diced onion, 1 tbsp. chili powder, and 1 tsp. cumin. Cook on medium heat until the potatoes are tender. ♥

PARENT TO PARENT A healthy weight

I recently noticed that my daughter Joslyn was spending a lot of time alone in her room. I asked if something was bothering her, and after we talked for a while, she admitted that she was self-conscious about her weight.

I suggested that she talk to her doctor, and she agreed. The doctor told her that, although she's slightly overweight, she's healthy—and she should focus on *staying* healthy by eating nutritious foods and exercising every day.

The next time I went grocery shopping, I asked Joslyn to come along. I was pleased when she added fresh fruits and vegetables and fat-free milk to the cart on her own. She also asked a new student at school to walk around the school track with her every afternoon.

It's only been a few weeks, but Joslyn's already lost five pounds. She's definitely happier—and she's made a new friend. ♥



OUR PURPOSE

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

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