

Teen Food & Fitness

Healthy Ideas for Middle and High School Students

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Union School District

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FAST TAKES



Healthy snack stops

The best way for your teen to prevent a snack attack while shopping is to eat before he leaves the house. If he does eat in a food court, suggest that he look for healthy options like a snack box with hummus and veggies or a kid-sized frozen yogurt topped with fresh fruit.

Did You Know?

Kids reach their peak bone density during adolescence. To start adulthood with strong bones, your teens need plenty of calcium now—1,300 mg per day. Just 1 cup of milk provides 300 mg. They can get calcium from other dairy products, too, as well as from leafy greens, beans, and tofu.



Confident about PE

Gym class gives your teen exercise during the school day and lets her try different activities. But adolescents may be self-conscious or compare their changing bodies to others'. To help your child feel confident, encourage her to aim for her personal best. Maybe she'll try to beat her time in the mile tomorrow or make more assists in volleyball next week.

Just for fun

Q: Can you write a letter on an empty stomach?

A: Sure, but it's much easier to write on paper!



Meal prep master

Save time on busy school nights by making meals in advance. You and your teen can get a head start on dinner with these strategies.

Slice and dice

Firmer vegetables can be cut up and refrigerated in airtight containers for several days. For instance, seed and slice bell peppers for rice bowls or pasta dishes. Peel and dice carrots and onions to saute for sauces and stews. Break broccoli or cauliflower into florets to steam in the microwave as a healthy side dish.

Double up

Serve the same food in different ways this week. You won't even realize you're eating leftovers. Cook twice the amount of chicken or fish you need for one meal, and you'll have plenty for tacos one night and pasta another. Or roast a double batch of vegetables like butternut squash and brussels sprouts, and save half for a tasty addition to salads.



Prep while you sleep

Some foods pretty much prep themselves! Before bed, ask your teen to take meat out of the freezer and put it in the refrigerator. It will thaw so you can season it and throw it in the oven tomorrow. She could also soak dry beans in a bowl of cool water on the counter overnight. They'll soften and be ready to cook. ♡

Find your target heart rate

How will your child know if he's exercising his heart strenuously enough to help it stay healthy? By checking his heart rate. Share these steps.

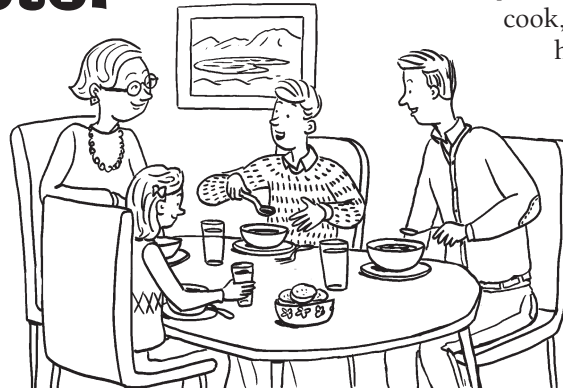
1. Subtract your age from 220 to estimate your maximum heart rate (the most your heart should beat per minute). *Example:* For a 16-year-old, $220 - 16 = 204$ maximum heart rate.
2. Compute 50–85 percent of that maximum to get your target range (102–173 for the 16-year-old). A newly active teen might aim for 50 percent, while an athlete can shoot for the higher side.
3. During exercise, check your pulse by placing two fingers (palm-side down) on the inside of your wrist. Count the heartbeats for 15 seconds, and multiply by 4 for the total per minute to make sure you're in your target range. ♡



Improve character at mealtimes

Whether your teen is eating with you or at someone else's house, the dinner table is the perfect place for him to pick up good habits that make meals more enjoyable for everyone. He can learn to be:

Polite. Have your teenager ask for food to be passed rather than reaching across the table. He should also wait for others to be served before he eats and stay at the table until everyone is finished. Carry on a pleasant conversation, and he can practice waiting his turn to speak.



Respectful. To be considerate of the cook, your teen should try foods he's offered and avoid making negative comments. Encourage him to keep an open mind if he eats with people who have different food preferences and customs. He might discover that a vegetarian meal can be satisfying. Or maybe he'll develop a taste for cumin or harissa.

Grateful. Remind him to say thank you to the cook and mention something specific he liked about the meal. ("I loved the soup. Could you give my mom the recipe?") He could also show gratitude by helping to clean up so the cook can relax. ♡



Q & A Say no to supplements

Q: My son is really into working out. He wants to try supplements, such as protein powders, to "bulk up." Should I let him?

A: Protein supplements generally aren't a good idea for growing teens. Many aren't regulated by the FDA, they won't actually make your son's muscles bigger and stronger, and they're often expensive.

Teen athletes do need slightly more protein (0.45–0.6 grams per pound of body weight vs. 0.3–0.4 for non-athletes). But it's easy to get this much from a healthy diet. You can explain to your son that consuming more protein than he needs may translate to excess calories that must be stored, usually in the form of fat.



Instead of spending money on supplements, encourage your son to eat a serving of protein within 30 minutes after working out to help his muscles recover. Good options include a hard-boiled egg, string cheese, or lean turkey slices. ♡

ACTIVITY CORNER

Winter workout solutions

When it's cold all day and dark outside by 5 p.m., your tween might need to adjust her workout routine. Suggest these ideas.

- **Walk indoors.** Suggest that your child meet friends at an indoor track or shopping mall for a power walk.
- **Switch times.** Your tween could bundle up and enjoy her usual outdoor activities (circuits, drills) after school when it's still light out. On weekends, she might save her outdoor workout for the warmest part of the day.
- **Make the most of snow.** Shoveling snow is a good workout—and your child can help neighbors by shoveling theirs. Also, she's not too old for sledding! Pulling her sled back up the hill will give her exercise. ♡



In the Kitchen

A menu of minis

What's tiny, tasty, and nutritious? Finger foods made with healthy ingredients! Try these recipes.

Enchilada "muffins"

Press 12 small whole-wheat flour tortillas into the cups of a muffin tin. Bake at 350° for 10 minutes, until crisp. Meanwhile, mix a 10-oz. can enchilada sauce, 2 cups shredded cooked chicken, a 4-oz. can chopped green chiles, and a 15-oz. can pinto beans (drained and rinsed) in a bowl. Spoon into tortillas, top with $\frac{1}{2}$ cup shredded cheddar, and bake 15 minutes more.



Greek salad skewers

Thread cherry tomatoes, cucumber rounds, pitted black olives, and cubed feta cheese onto toothpicks. Drizzle with balsamic dressing.

Turkey spinach sliders

Combine 1 lb. lean ground turkey, 4 cups chopped fresh spinach, 1 tsp. each onion and garlic powder, and a pinch of salt and pepper. Divide into 12 small patties. Cook in a skillet over medium-high heat, about 5 minutes per side. Serve with raw spinach leaves and mustard on whole-grain slider buns. ♡

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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