

Teen Food & Fitness

Healthy Ideas for Middle and High School Students

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Cocke County Board of Education

FAST TAKES



Rice for the week

Your teen can cook a big batch of brown rice to use for quick meals—and healthy servings of whole grains—throughout the week. He could add cold rice directly to soups and stir-fries. Or suggest that he reheat rice in the microwave. (Add 1 tbsp. water, cover, and heat 1–2 minutes.)

It's citrus season!

Winter is prime time for citrus fruit, which is chock full of vitamin C. Stock up on oranges, tangerines, grapefruits, or even pomelos (a giant fruit that tastes like a mild grapefruit). Teach your teen to pick fruit with a smooth, vibrant-colored peel. And help her find fruit that feels heavy for its size, which hints at juiciness. She can enjoy these fruits as snacks or in salads.



Did You Know?

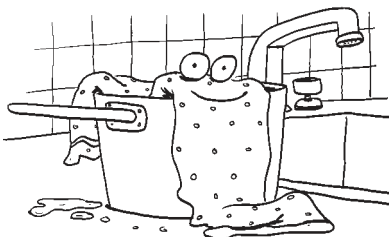
Exercising outdoors after dark requires its own set of safety rules.

Have your teen place reflectors on his clothing, bicycle, and shoes. Also, he should keep music off to stay aware of his surroundings. Make sure he chooses familiar, well-lit routes and dresses in layers that he can remove if he's too warm.

Just for fun

Q: What gets wetter the more it dries?

A: A kitchen towel.



Say no to empty calories

About a quarter of the average teenager's daily calories are "empty," meaning they come from foods with little or no nutritional value. Help your child recognize these common sources of empty calories—and learn to replace them with healthy options.



Coffee shop drinks

Sweetened lattes and blended coffee drinks are often loaded with flavored syrups and topped with whipped cream. Many contain more than a dozen teaspoons of sugar and hundreds of calories! *Healthy alternatives:* Smoothies with real fruit and fat-free milk. Decaf iced tea drinks sweetened with 100 percent fruit juice.

Pepperoni pizza

Pizza with regular crust and processed meats like pepperoni, sausage, and bacon are full of sodium and saturated fat. *Healthy alternative:* Thin-crust pizza (whole wheat, if available) topped with vegetables like spinach, mushrooms, tomatoes, and green peppers.

French fries

Potatoes lose much of their nutritional value when they're deep-fried and laden with salt. *Healthy alternative:* Baked fries. (Cut a large potato into strips and toss with $\frac{1}{2}$ tbsp. olive oil, $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. paprika, and just a dash of salt. Bake at 450° for 45 minutes, flipping them half-way through.)

Dessert

Does your teen crave a sweet treat after dinner? Cookies, cakes, pies, and candy are all high in added sugar. *Healthy alternatives:* Frozen Greek yogurt bars or 100 percent fruit pops. 🍓

An apple a day ...

Sometimes kids just need a reminder! Hang this checklist on your refrigerator to encourage him to adopt healthy habits:



- I eat breakfast every morning.
- I make fruits and vegetables half of my plate for each meal.
- I vary my lean protein choices from day to day.
- I switched from whole milk to fat-free milk.
- I make at least half of my grains whole grains.
- I drink water throughout the day.
- I am physically active at least an hour a day. 🍓

The right-size bite

Becoming a “portion pro” can get your tween or teen on a path to healthier eating. Consider these tips.

Find comparisons. Suggest that your child use everyday objects as visual cues. For instance, he could serve himself a portion of meat the size of a deck of cards, a potato the size of a hockey puck, or peanut butter shaped into a Ping-Pong ball. *Idea:* Ask him to look up portion sizes and choose other objects to compare them to. Then, he could take photos or draw pictures



to create his own illustrated guide. Hang it on the refrigerator to help the whole family.

Serve the right amount. It’s hard for your teen to see how much he’s eating when he’s reaching into a bag or box of chips or crackers. Instead, encourage him to put the serving size listed on the label on a plate. At meals, after everyone has served themselves right-sized portions of foods, put leftovers into the refrigerator. That way, there will be less temptation to eat seconds. ●



Q & A Leave picky eating behind

Q: My son is now a teenager, and he’s still a picky eater. How can I get him to branch out and not eat like a little kid anymore?

A: As you may have already found, pressuring your teen into eating (or anything else) can backfire. Instead, expose him to new foods in ways that put him in control. Does he like to dip chicken nuggets (and everything else) into ketchup or ranch? Casually put out crunchy vegetables with salsa, and see if his tendency to “dip” carries over!



Then, rather than focusing on what your son won’t eat, build upon what he *does* eat. If he’s a pasta lover, try tossing vegetables in with the noodles—a little bit at first, and gradually more as he gets used to the taste. Good bets are sweeter veggies like carrots or butternut squash. ●

OUR PURPOSE

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

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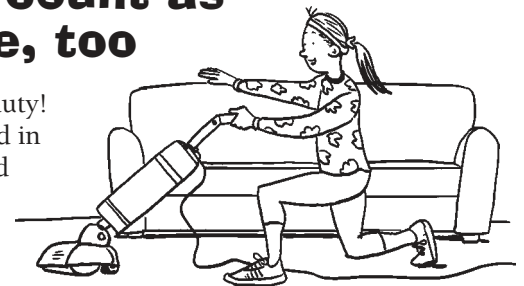
ACTIVITY CORNER Chores count as exercise, too

Household cleaning does double duty! Here are ways your teenager can add in physical activity as she helps around the house.

Vacuuming. Pushing a vacuum and moving furniture to clean underneath can get your child’s heart pumping. Suggest that she do walking lunges as she vacuums.

Dusting. The brisk, circular motion used to dust furniture, books, and windowsills is a great way to tone arms and shoulders. Remind your teen to switch hands so both sides feel the burn.

Washing dishes. No reason to stand still while cleaning up from dinner—encourage your child to do calf raises and knee bends while she rinses dishes and puts them in the dishwasher. ●



In the Kitchen Put it all in a pan

For dinner in a jiffy, try these all-in-one sheet-pan meals. Your teen can preheat the oven to 400°, toss the ingredients on a baking sheet, bake—and serve *you* for a change!

Honey mustard chicken & veggies

Whisk 1 tbsp. each of Dijon mustard, honey, and olive oil, plus salt and pepper to taste. Mix with 1 lb. boneless chicken breasts, ½ lb. brussels

sprouts, and 2 cups diced red potatoes. Bake 30 minutes or until chicken is cooked through.

Fish & pepper fajitas

Slice 1 red onion and 1 red and 1 green bell pepper. Drizzle veggies and 1 lb. cod fillets with 2 tbsp. olive oil and sprinkle on 1½ tbsp. low-sodium taco seasoning. Bake 15 minutes, or until the fish flakes easily. Serve with warmed corn tortillas. ●

