

Teen Food & Fitness

Healthy Ideas for Middle and High School Students

February 2021

Cocke County Board of Education

FAST TAKES



Lighten up salads

Many salad dressings, especially creamy ones, contain added fat. Instead of reaching for bottled dressing, suggest that your tween squeeze fresh lemon juice and drizzle a little olive oil over her salad. Keeping the dressing simple will deliver a lighter flavor and let her really taste the vegetables she's eating.



Cheers to better health

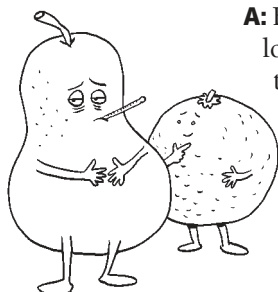
Losing weight isn't the only reason to celebrate getting healthier. Cheer your teen on for non-scale victories, such as being able to move a bookshelf without help because he has strengthened his arm muscles. Taking the focus off weight loss might inspire your child to stick with healthy routines.

Did You Know?

Shin splints are common among athletes who do sports like running, soccer, and tennis. To prevent this injury, encourage your teen to vary her activity so she uses different muscles. Wearing sneakers with added support may also ease discomfort. *Note:* Make sure to check with your child's doctor if the pain is severe.

Just for fun

Q: Why did the orange think the pear was sick?



A: Because it looked a little green.

Avoid mindless snacking

At times, it can be hard for your tween or teen to figure out whether he's really hungry or just eating out of habit or boredom. To cut down on mindless snacking, share these strategies.



Look for patterns

If your tween always grabs something to eat while he watches TV or does homework, it may be out of habit rather than hunger. Encourage him to wait until he's finished what he's doing. Then, if he doesn't really feel hungry, he might just switch to a new activity. *Tip:* Consider having a "kitchen only" rule for eating to discourage snacking while lounging around the house.

Stay busy

Brainstorm alternatives to looking for food when your teen is bored but not hungry. He could call a friend, build a model rocket, or play his guitar. Or

chewing on sugar-free gum may be all he needs. Finally, he might simply be thirsty, and sipping on water or hot herbal tea will do the trick.

Walk it off

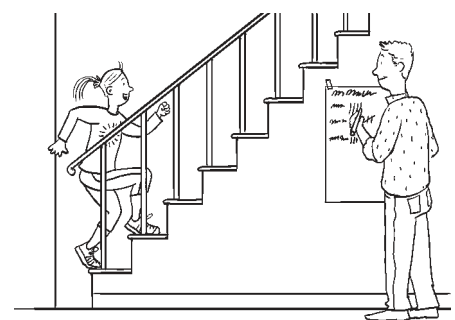
Staying active can be just the thing to help your child avoid eating out of habit or boredom. Have him walk the dog at the time he normally hits the fridge. Or challenge him to lift weights. Not only will he get exercise, it will also keep his mind off eating—and he may discover he wasn't hungry after all. ♥

Tip of the week

When your whole family works together, everyone can be more active. Consider this idea.

Each week, let a different person decide on an exercise tip. *Examples:* Run up and down the stairs four times during TV commercials. Walk to one place instead of driving.

Post the weekly tip on a bulletin board or whiteboard, list family members' names, and ask each person to make a tally mark by her name when she uses the tip. Take a picture of the completed chart each week—you'll have a reminder of your fitness success. ♥



Breakfast first

Who has time for breakfast? With a little planning and creativity, everyone does! Try these tips to help your family power up for the day.

All you can eat. Set up a no-fuss “buffet” on the kitchen table. Put out items like whole-grain cereal, mini-bagels, low-fat cream cheese, apples, melon chunks, 100 percent orange juice, and fat-free milk.



Ready to go. Prepare breakfast the night before. Your teen could make a peanut-butter-and-banana sandwich on whole-wheat bread, then wash and cut celery into sticks. She'll have a balanced meal waiting for her when she gets up.

Weekend brunch. Enjoy special morning meals on weekends. Vary what you make—perhaps whole-wheat waffles one week and poached eggs on English muffins the next. Brainstorm menu ideas, and rotate who prepares brunch each week. ♥

PARENT TO PARENT Careers in nutrition

I noticed that my daughter, Kayla, was developing more than a passing interest in nutrition. Now she likes to research ingredients and figure out what is good for her body.

Since she's starting to think about careers, I suggested she consider nutrition. Her school counselor gave her information on becoming a registered dietitian, which requires a college degree, an internship, and passing a national exam.



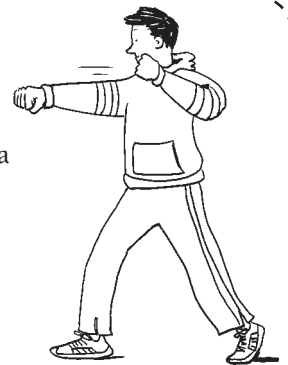
The counselor also said Kayla should continue taking math and science courses throughout high school, plus PE (which includes health lessons) and the school's nutrition education elective.

Kayla was excited to learn that dietitians are employed in many businesses, from schools and hospitals to gyms, assisted-living facilities, and restaurants. She's not sure whether she'll end up going into nutrition, but regardless, she's learning a lot about healthy eating. ♥

ACTIVITY CORNER Boxing moves

Boxing is more than just a sport. It's a great solo workout, too. With these basic boxing drills, your teen can work up a sweat—no punching bag required.

- **Jab.** Stand with legs apart, arms bent, and fists in front of your face. Quickly move your right arm, punch at the air, and return to the start position. Repeat 5–10 times per side.
- **Bob and weave.** Bend at the knees in a squat with hands in the “guard” position. Come up on the right side by straightening your left leg—as if you're dodging a punch to the left. Go into a squat again, and repeat on the other side. Try doing this for one minute. *Variation:* Throw in a jab each time you weave up.
- **Back kick.** Stand with feet hip-width apart, knees slightly bent, and fists up. Lift your right foot, and kick your leg straight back. Do up to 12 reps, and switch sides. ♥



In the Kitchen Healthier grilled cheese

A classic comfort food, the grilled-cheese sandwich is easy for parents and teens to make. Up the nutritional value and lower the fat with these suggestions.

Use healthier bread

Make your sandwich with multi-grain, whole-wheat, or white whole-wheat bread. If your child is not used to whole-grain bread, he could try one piece of white and one whole-wheat.

Try shredded cheese

While cheese is a good source of calcium and protein, it is high in

fat. Opt for a thin layer of low-fat shredded cheddar cheese rather than full-fat American cheese slices.

Replace butter with spray

Instead of spreading butter on the bread, spritz nonstick cooking spray into a heated skillet.

Add vegetables

Chop leftover cooked vegetables (broccoli, zucchini) and toss with the shredded cheese before grilling. Or put sliced tomato into the sandwich before grilling. ♥



OUR PURPOSE

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

Resources for Educators,
a division of CCH Incorporated
128 N. Royal Avenue • Front Royal, VA 22630
800-394-5052 • rfeustomer@wolterskluwer.com
www.rfeonline.com

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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