

Teen Food & Fitness

Healthy Ideas for Middle and High School Students

December 2016

Memorial Jr. School



FAST TAKES

Hot drinks

If your teen drinks coffee, consider coaxing her toward healthier options. Warm herbal tea with lemon and honey is a soothing alternative.

Suggest that she try calcium-rich “hot vanilla” — microwave a cup

of fat-free milk, and add 1 tsp. honey and $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. vanilla extract.



Did You Know?

Bedroom TVs are linked with obesity. Studies show that children who have sets in their rooms may watch more than five hours per day. That means less time for physical activity. If your teenager has one in his room, consider moving it to a common area so you can monitor his screen time.

Get-fit gifts

This holiday season, think about choosing gifts that will help a young person in your life enjoy physical activity. Useful options might include: a water bottle in her favorite color, workout socks, a yoga mat, a gym towel, hair ties, or a gift certificate to a trampoline gym or fitness class.

Just for fun

Q: What's a polar bear's favorite food?

A: Frozen yogurt!



Grocery shopping 101

Good nutrition begins at the grocery store. Go food shopping with your tween or teen, and talk about how to choose healthy foods. You'll help him to eat well now and to be a smart shopper when he is on his own.

Fruits and vegetables

Show your child how to select fruits and vegetables. For example, he should choose apples that are firm and bananas that will be ripe when he's ready to eat them. If you need an item that isn't in season (blueberries or corn in the winter), explain that frozen fruits and vegetables are a nutritious, and still tasty, option. Canned is the last choice, since nutrients may be lost when foods are processed, and sugar or salt may be added.

Grains and cereals

Teach your tween to spot whole-grain products when you're choosing bread, cereal, tortillas, crackers, rice, and pasta. The package will often be labeled “100% whole grain,” and the first ingredient will be whole wheat or another whole grain. *Idea:* Find a package that says “wheat” (not “whole wheat”) on the



front, and have him check the ingredient list. The main ingredient is likely to be enriched flour—which is white flour—rather than whole wheat.

Meats and poultry

Explain how to select the leanest meat by finding the lowest percentage of fat. For example, look for ground beef labeled “lean” or “extra lean.” Buy skinless chicken, or remove the skin at home. While ready-to-cook meats and poultry are convenient, you might steer your teen away from them because they often contain breading and marinades with sodium and preservatives. You can add your own flavorings at home. ●

A new way to use the tray

An ice cube tray can do a lot more than freeze ice! Try these ideas with your youngster for shortcuts and fun treats:

- Save fresh herbs by freezing them along with enough olive oil to cover the herbs.
- Pour chicken, beef, or vegetable stock or tomato sauce into an ice cube tray. Use the frozen cubes when you need a small amount of broth or sauce for a recipe.
- Puree blueberries, kale, and water in a blender until smooth. Pour the mixture into a tray, and use the cubes in place of plain ice when you're making smoothies.
- Mix yogurt, berries, and chocolate chips to freeze for portion-controlled sweet treats. ●



Break out of your food comfort zone

It's not unusual for tweens and teens to pick familiar foods. But a balanced diet requires some variety. These tips might nudge your child toward new foods.

Sample one at a time. Instead of cooking an entire meal with new foods, use just one new ingredient at a time. For example, if your teen likes macaroni and cheese, mix in some fresh spinach. Or serve fish on top of her favorite rice.

Keep at it. Researchers say it can take up to 15 tries before a child discovers she enjoys something new. So offer foods again (and again!) even if your teen initially didn't like it. And



try preparing it different ways, maybe microwaving asparagus one time and stirring asparagus pieces into scrambled eggs another time.

Start small. A big pile of black beans might overwhelm your tween. Instead, have her put a spoonful on her plate. She won't feel pressed to eat a lot if she doesn't like it. Or use small bowls, and taste-test several new foods. ●



ACTIVITY CORNER

Snow games

When winter brings snow, encourage your teens to get a fun workout. Suggest that they challenge their friends to games like these.

Sled race.

Race to be first to sled down a hill and run back up. No-snow variation: Have a running contest up and down the hill.



Batter up. Hold batting practice with snowballs, and watch them fly apart on contact. Each batter gets 10 pitches. The winner is the one with the most hits. No snow? Use water balloons, or just practice batting using a tennis ball or softball.

Snow architect. Compete to build the biggest snowman or another snow sculpture. If there's no snow, build a fort inside using household materials. ●

PARENT TO PARENT

Eating disorder concerns

I've been worried that my daughter Lara is overly concerned about her weight. She constantly checks herself in the mirror and talks about how fat she is—even though she's not. I spoke to our pediatrician, who discussed signs that could point to an eating disorder.

First, she asked if Lara had been avoiding meals or pushing food around on her plate to make it seem like she's eating. Then, she said to look for more serious symptoms like throwing up after meals or taking laxatives.

I don't see any of those signs now, but I am keeping a careful eye on Lara. And I am trying to boost her self-esteem by complimenting her hard work and kind actions. If she feels better about herself, I hope she won't focus so much on her appearance.

Note: While eating disorders are more common among girls, boys can experience them, too. These tips apply to boys as well. ●



In the Kitchen

Get together and eat!

Feed your friends and family with these party-perfect recipes.

Cuban sliders

Split 15 slider buns or dinner rolls in half. Place the bottom halves of the buns in a 9" x 13" pan. Dab some mustard on them, and top with lean ham, Swiss cheese slices, and a pickle chip. Add the top halves of the buns, and cover with foil. Bake for 15 minutes at 350°.

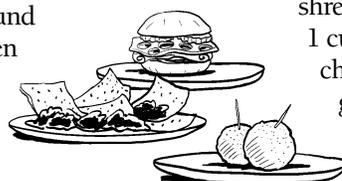
Turkey meatballs

Combine 1 lb. lean ground turkey, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup chopped green onion, 1 tbsp. minced garlic, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup dried bread-crumbs, 1 beaten egg, 2 tbsp. chopped parsley,

1 tsp. salt, and $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. pepper. Form into 1" meatballs. Place on a baking sheet lined with foil, and bake at 400° for 10–15 minutes. Poke each with a toothpick, and serve with your favorite dipping sauce.

Sheet pan nachos

Spray a cookie sheet with nonstick cooking spray, and spread out 40 baked tortilla chips. Top the chips with 1 cup pinto beans (canned, drained), 1 cup shredded cooked chicken, 1 cup shredded cheddar cheese, and 1 cup pico de gallo. Bake at 400° for 15–20 minutes (or until cheese melts). ●



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
540-636-4280 • 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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