

Teen Food & Fitness

Healthy Ideas for Middle and High School Students

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Gwinnett School Nutrition Program
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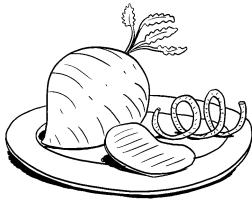
FAST TAKES

Smaller meals

Instead of three big meals a day, suggest that your teen eat five smaller meals. This plan can keep him full and help him avoid snacking too much or overeating at dinner. He could have a light breakfast, lunch, and dinner and replace snacks with “mini-meals” (sandwich, oatmeal with fruit) after school and midway between dinner and bedtime.

Beet treats

Transform this tasty root vegetable into healthy fries or chips. Use a spiralizer to make beets into “curly fries.” Or thinly slice beets into “chips.” Toss either with olive oil, salt, and pepper, place on a cookie sheet, and bake at 375° for 20 minutes.



Did You Know?

Research shows that kids who exercise regularly are likely to stay active when they grow up. Encourage your child to find an activity she loves so she'll be apt to stick with it. She might take a taekwondo class at a community center, go for regular bike rides, or join a school sports team.

Just for fun

Q: Why did the teddy bear say no to dessert?

A: Because he was stuffed!



Cooking basics

Kitchen skills boost confidence and increase the chances your tween or teen will enjoy cooking. Share these important building blocks for getting started.

Boiling: A simple but useful technique, boiling water is the first step for many meals. Fill a pot with water, leaving a few inches at the top. Turn heat to high. Let it go until bubbles quickly rise and pop on the surface.

Practice: Make pasta, boil potatoes, or cook a batch of rice.

Sauteing: This French word sounds fancy, but knowing how to saute means your child can scramble eggs or cook a flavorful stir-fry. Heat a small amount of oil or butter in a skillet. Add the food. Stir, or shake the skillet occasionally, until the food is golden brown and cooked through.

Practice: Choose a mix of vegetables, such as snap peas, spinach, and broccoli to stir-fry. Cook shrimp (turns pink when it's ready). Saute tofu.

Using a knife: Get a sharp knife that's right for the job—a chef's knife to slice vegetables and meat and a paring knife to peel fruits like apples or peaches. (*Beginner's tip:* If your tween isn't ready for a chef's knife, start with a smaller one.) Use a cutting board, and keep fingertips safe by curling them under the knuckles when holding foods to chop.

Practice: Slice bananas, cube hard cheeses, and cut carrots into sticks. ♡



At home in the kitchen

As your child masters cooking techniques, encourage him to take pride in his cooking with these ideas.

Chef of the day

Put your teen in charge of dinner once a month or once a week. He can plan the meal from start to finish, including making a grocery list and going with you to shop for ingredients. At home, offer to help with prep, and be sure to compliment him on a job well done!



My signature dish

Encourage your teen to invent a dish that he's “known for.” He could begin with a family favorite or a recipe he finds online and experiment with ingredients until he's satisfied. For instance, he might try different vegetables in his shepherd's pie or various seasonings in his “secret” marinade. ♡

Outdoor exercise

Crisp winter air can be refreshing when your teen exercises outdoors. Here are tips to help him stay fit—safely and comfortably—throughout winter.

Try ice-skating. Look for an ice rink or a frozen pond in your area. *Important:* Abide by posted signs or flags to be sure the ice is safe. Your teenager might also find pop-up rinks at a mall, town center, or park where he can skate during the holiday season.



Go for a run. Running is a great way to warm up quickly in cold weather. Suggest that your teen keep moving, since clothes damp from sweat will make him chilled. He should walk (not stop) if he gets tired and head indoors as soon as he's finished.

Idea: He could sign up for an early spring race or fun run to stay motivated.

Tip: When it comes to workout wear, layers are the way to go. Encourage your child to put on an extra shirt, vest, or jacket. As his body warms up, he can shed layers. ♣



ACTIVITY CORNER

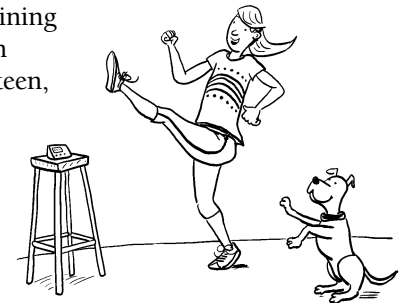
Quick-HIIT workout

High-intensity interval training (HIIT) workouts amp up calorie burn and banish boredom. Share this routine with your tween or teen, or encourage her to create her own.

She should march in place for 30 seconds to warm up and cool down. In between, have her do each of the following exercises for 1 minute. She can “actively rest” by marching in place for 20 seconds between moves.

1. Jumping jacks.
2. Scissor kicks. Lie on your back, raise your legs off the floor, and move your legs back and forth like scissors.
3. Walking lunges. Lunge forward on your left leg until the right knee almost touches the ground. Then lunge forward on your right leg. Alternate legs to move forward.
4. Push-ups.
5. High kicks. Bounce on your toes, and alternate kicking each leg as high as you can.
6. Sit-ups.

Note: To reduce the risk of injury, your teen should do no more than 2–3 sessions a week, with at least 24 hours' rest and recovery in between. ♣



PARENT TO PARENT Healthier parties

Our family hosts a lot of parties and get-togethers this time of year. So we started thinking of ways to make these gatherings a bit healthier.

For our first party, we decided to set up a do-it-yourself healthy dessert bar. My son Matthew helped me choose options like orange segments and whole-grain pretzels to dip in melted chocolate or vanilla yogurt. We added chopped nuts and seeds for people to roll the dipped treats in for crunch. Everyone loved the idea, and for once, we didn't feel too full after dessert.



Next, it's my sister's turn to host a holiday gathering. She just told me she's going to “steal” my idea. That will be two healthier get-togethers in a row! ♣

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.

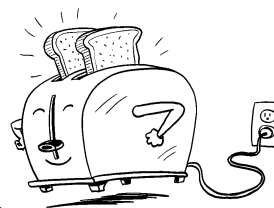
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In the Kitchen Toast it up

With these sweet and savory recipes, your teen just might want toast for breakfast, lunch, and snack!

Peaches and cream

Spread 3 tbsp. plain Greek yogurt on whole-wheat toast. Top with 6 thin frozen peach slices (thawed). Drizzle with $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. honey and a dash of dried coconut.



Green peas and eggs

Using a fork or a potato masher, mash $\frac{1}{3}$ cup cooked green peas with salt and pepper to taste, leaving mixture a bit chunky. Spoon onto whole-grain toast, and add a sliced hard-boiled egg or a fried egg. Sprinkle with red pepper flakes.

Peanut butter and berry

Start with a layer of 2 tbsp. peanut butter (or sunflower seed butter). Cover with $\frac{1}{4}$ cup frozen blackberries or blueberries (thawed). *Variation:* Swap cottage cheese for peanut butter. ♣