

Teen Food & Fitness

Healthy Ideas for Middle and High School Students

September 2017

Gwinnett School Nutrition Program
Taylor Blake, MS, RDN, LD



FAST TAKES

Eat sitting down

Like many teens, your child may grab a snack and stand up while she eats. Encourage her to take a seat instead. She'll be more conscious of what she's eating, which will help her know when she's full. That way, she'll be less likely to overeat.

Toothbrush-ercise

Your teen can fit in mini-workouts while he brushes his teeth. Standing straight, with his back against a wall, he should slowly bend his knees into a squatting (or chair) position. He can brush as he holds the pose for 30–60 seconds, stands back up, and repeats.

Did You Know?

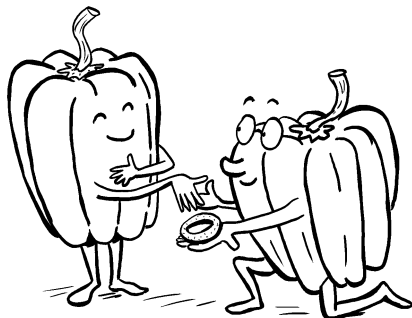
Ketchup, salad dressings, cereal, and some brands of bread may be surprisingly high in sugar. So even if your tween isn't munching on candy, she might be getting more of the sweet stuff than you think. Have her check food packages for clue words like fructose, honey, corn syrup, or cane juice—all types of added sugars.



Just for fun

Q: What do vegetables wear when they get engaged?

A: Onion rings!



Mouthwatering ways to add nutrients

With school in full swing, life is busy for your teen, and getting the nutrients he needs may fall off his radar. But eating right can be as easy as it is delicious. Make his favorite foods more nutritious with these tweaks.

Reach for greens

Keep fresh and frozen greens on hand. You could put leftover broccoli or asparagus into omelets, or add spinach or kale to pizza or couscous. Dark leafy greens like collards, spinach, and mustard greens can be blended into smoothies or rolled into wraps.

Blend in beans

Stock up on canned beans to get more protein into your tween's diet. You might combine black beans (drained, rinsed) with taco meat, or puree and stir them into marinara sauce. Puree white beans

into homemade or canned (low-sodium) soups for a creamy texture.

Add whole grains

Fiber-rich whole grains fit seamlessly into many foods that are popular with teenagers. Try mixing cooked quinoa into burgers, meatloaf, or meatballs. Use whole-wheat breadcrumbs to coat strips of chicken or fish, and bake. Making salad? Toss in cooked barley or brown rice. ♡



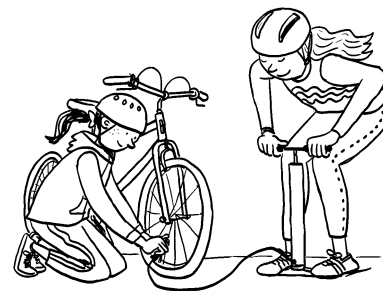
Fit & safe

Safety and fitness will go hand in hand with these everyday tips for young runners or cyclists.

Stick to safe paths. Help your teenager map out routes that avoid heavy traffic or isolated spots. Remind her to cross intersections safely—pressing the “walk” button if there is one, waiting for the light, and staying in the crosswalk.

Go with a partner. There's safety in numbers, so encourage her to run, walk, or bike with a friend—or with you! If you're biking, help to pump up each other's tires before heading out.

Stay aware. It's a good idea for your tween to take a (charged) phone in case she runs into a problem. But she needs to see and hear everything around her, so she shouldn't hold it—or listen to music or use headphones—while running or riding. ♡



Flavor—minus the sodium

Spices can transform a recipe from bland to grand. Cut down on your family's salt intake—and add interesting flavors to meals—with these suggestions.

1. Skimp on salt. Did you realize that a taste for salty foods is learned? That means it can be unlearned, too! Try using half the salt called for when you cook, and sprinkle in spices instead. At meals, put the salt shaker away. You can even give it back to the waiter if you're eating out. *Note:* Watch out for



purchased spice blends like lemon pepper that contain salt.

2. Be a spice master.

Encourage your tween to experiment with spice combinations. She'll learn about their flavors and have fun devising her own mixes. Perhaps she'll blend chili powder, cumin, and garlic powder to create low-sodium taco seasoning. Or she could combine basil, oregano, and rosemary into an Italian seasoning for chicken. *Tip:* Suggest that she package and label her "custom blends" in baggies. ●



Q & A Individual sports

Q: My daughter isn't really interested in team sports. How can I make sure she stays active?

A: No worries! There are still plenty of ways for her to get exercise—alone or with a friend. Help her brainstorm activities to try, perhaps dancing, hiking, or swimming.



Together, look for options nearby. She might find a hip-hop or lyrical dance class at a community center. Or maybe she'd enjoy an extreme sport like parkour or rock climbing through the parks and recreation department.

Even if your daughter doesn't sign up for a formal activity, she and a friend could motivate each other to stay active. They might get together weekly to do workout videos or go Rollerblading. ●

ACTIVITY CORNER

Lunge to fitness

Your teen can try different lunges to keep his workouts fresh. Adding weights, whether dumbbells or soup cans, will help him build arm strength. *Note:* Do 2–3 sets of each exercise, with 10–15 repetitions per set.



- **The woodchop.** With feet hip-width apart, grasp a weight in both hands above your left shoulder near your ear. Lunge forward with your right leg, and move the weight diagonally across your body. Move weight to other side, and repeat.
- **Lunge and curl.** Hold a weight down by each side, elbows tight to your body and palms facing up. Stand with feet hip-width apart. Lunge forward with one leg while curling both weights up to your shoulders. Return to the starting position, and lunge with the other leg.
- **Side to side.** Starting with feet hip-width apart, hold weights down by your sides. Lunge left, lifting your arms straight out to shoulder height, and return to the starting position. Then, lift your right foot, and lunge right. ●

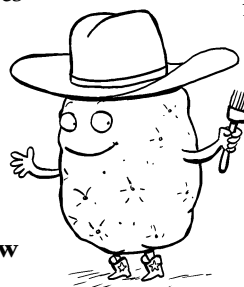
In the Kitchen

Potatoes three ways

Set out potatoes and toppings, and let everyone have it their way with these ideas for a "baked potato bar."

To cook:

Wash one white or sweet potato per person. Puncture the potatoes all over with a fork. **For the oven,** place directly on the rack, and bake at 425° for 45 minutes. **For the microwave,** wrap in a wet paper towel, cook for 5 minutes, flip, and cook another 5 minutes. Or place in a **slow cooker** for 8 hours on low.



Toppings:

- 1. BBQ.** Layer chopped cooked chicken, shredded cabbage, crumbled blue cheese, and low-sodium barbecue sauce.
- 2. Italian.** Spoon $\frac{1}{4}$ cup ricotta cheese into each potato, and add halved grape tomatoes and fresh basil.
- 3. Fruit.** Scoop out a sweet potato's flesh, mash, and mix in $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. cinnamon. Put back in the skin, and top with diced apples, pecans, and dried cranberries. ●

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.
ISSN 1935-8865