

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



Rinse produce first

Fruits and vegetables cover a lot of ground before reaching your plate. Just before eating, remove dirt and germs by rubbing your produce under running water. Use a brush to scrub produce with rinds (melons, oranges) or potatoes. Rinse more delicate fruits like berries in a colander.



Fall foliage "tour"

Enjoy the autumn display of color with a family walk or hike. You might stroll through your town, trek through a park trail, or even visit a neighboring county or state to check out the changing leaves. Consider taking weekly walks, and have your tween snap pictures of trees so she can document the changes.

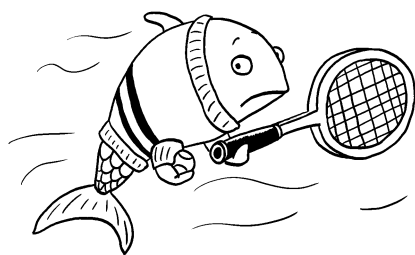
Did You Know?

Being overweight often affects self-esteem and may even lead to depression. If your child is overweight, ask the school nurse or his doctor for advice. They can offer strategies for handling any issues and for getting to a healthy weight. Your teen may also benefit from talking to his school counselor.

Just for fun

Q: Why aren't fish good at tennis?

A: They don't like getting close to the net.



Start with breakfast

Beginning the day with a healthy meal lets your teen "fuel up" and keep her motor running through morning classes. Make sure she doesn't miss this key meal with these easy suggestions.

Look to leftovers

What could be quicker than having last night's dinner for breakfast? Your teenager can simply reheat spaghetti or soup. Or she might chop up cooked mushrooms or green beans and stir into scrambled eggs just before they set. This could be a way to switch things up *and* to fit a few vegetables into breakfast.

Opt for overnight oats

On a Sunday afternoon, encourage your teen to put together overnight oats for the week. For each serving, she should layer $\frac{1}{2}$ cup uncooked oats, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup Greek yogurt, and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup milk (any kind) in a jar and refrigerate. In the morning, she can top with her favorites—bananas and berries for sweetness, nuts for crunch, nut butter for creaminess—and stir to blend the flavors.



Set it up

Make breakfast setup part of your family's dinner cleanup routine. While one person clears the table and another does the dishes, someone else could get things ready for the next morning. For instance, ask your tween or teen to put out cereal boxes, bowls, and spoons. Then, she might cut up fresh fruit and put it in the refrigerator alongside cottage cheese cups, yogurt, or other items to easily grab for breakfast. 🍓

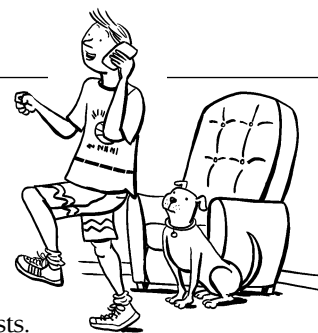
Bits of fitness

Little bursts of physical activity spread throughout the day add up. Encourage your tween or teen to incorporate these ideas into his routine:

- Instead of sitting or standing still while talking on the phone, jog in place or walk laps around the room.

- Use television commercial breaks for exercise contests.

Who can do the most crunches or jumping jacks before the show resumes? Or compete against yourself—counting the number you do during one break and trying to beat it the next. 🍓



Snack-bar eats

When your teen is out with friends at a football game or the movies, the concession stand can be tempting. But hot dogs, fries, and nachos don't have to be his only options. Share these tips to help him make healthier choices.

Eat first. Having a healthy meal or even a glass or two of water will help keep his hunger at bay. When possible, arrange for him to be at home for lunch or dinner before heading out to an event.

Take your own. Suggest that your teen pack snacks. Apples, sunflower seeds, string cheese, rice cakes, and trail



mix are nutritious—and easy to carry to a game.

Share with a friend. Splitting a soft pretzel or a large (plain) popcorn will not only save money but also cut down on calories.

Look for the healthy stuff. Concession stands often sell better-for-you options these days. Encourage your teen to go for fresh fruit or a grilled chicken sandwich. Instead

of soda, he should stick to water or even bring his own bottle to refill at a fountain. ♡

PARENT TO PARENT

Becoming a vegetarian

We are all meat eaters in our family, so I was surprised when my son, Aidan, decided to go vegetarian. I knew I didn't want to make two dinners every night, so I asked a vegetarian friend for strategies.

Sara gave me tips that are helping me cook for vegetarians and meat eaters. For instance, I've made big salads with edamame or chickpeas for protein and then put chicken on the side. Or Aidan will stir-fry veggies, remove them from the wok, and I'll stir-fry beef to serve separately.

She also suggested that I find meatless dishes everyone will enjoy, such as eggplant parmesan or veggie chili. And here's a bonus I never thought of. Sara mentioned that cooking for a vegetarian is a good way to get everyone eating more vegetables—and I can already see that's true! ♡



ACTIVITY CORNER

Build core strength

For teens who want to be stronger, core strength is where it's at. The core muscles—those in your torso and upper legs—are part of almost every move your teen or tween makes. Help her go beyond sit-ups with these three core exercises.

1. Standing crunch

Stand with your feet hip-width apart and hands locked behind your head. Lift your right knee while lowering your left elbow—so they meet midway across your body. Return to start, and repeat on the other side.

2. Seated leg lift

Sit with your legs extended out front, arms straight, and palms on the floor. Lift one leg about 6 inches off the floor. Hold 5 seconds and release. Alternate legs.

3. Spider crawl

Start in a plank position (like a push-up position, but rest your weight on your forearms). Bending your right knee, bring your right leg to your right elbow. Return to plank position. Repeat on the left side. ♡

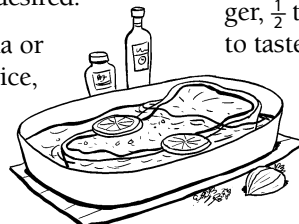


In the Kitchen

Healthy marinades

Marinades can take a meal from “meh” to marvelous. Put 1 lb. of your favorite protein (chicken, fish, steak, pork, tofu) in a zipper bag. Mix up one of these combinations, pour over the protein, and marinate between 20 minutes and 24 hours in the refrigerator. Then, bake or grill as desired.

Chili lime: $\frac{1}{4}$ cup canola or olive oil, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup lime juice, 1 tsp. chili powder, $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. each garlic and onion powders, and $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. coarse salt.



Lemon parsley: $\frac{1}{2}$ cup olive oil, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup lemon juice, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup fresh chopped parsley, 3 crushed garlic cloves, $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. pepper, and $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. coarse salt.

Honey ginger soy: $\frac{1}{4}$ cup low-sodium soy sauce, 2 tbsp. orange or pineapple juice, 1 tbsp. honey, 1 tsp. minced ginger, $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. minced garlic, and pepper to taste.

Food safety note: Throw away any uncooked marinade that touches raw meat. ♡

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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