

Teen Food & Fitness

Healthy Ideas for Middle and High School Students

January 2009

FAST TAKES

Password to fitness

Help your teen build in a daily reminder to eat well and exercise. Suggest that he pick “healthy” passwords for e-mail accounts, social-networking sites, and blogs. Choices like “eatsmart,” “playsports,” or “fit4life” will motivate him to eat well and stay fit each time he logs on.

Healthy dippers

Encourage your child to eat more fruits and vegetables with these fun ideas for dipping her food. At breakfast, she can dunk toasted waffles into unsweetened applesauce or orange slices into honey. After school, she might like red bell pepper strips or cauliflower pieces with ranch dressing.



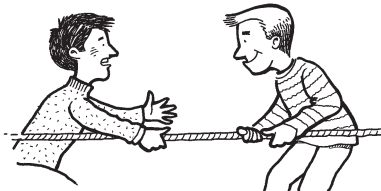
Did You Know?

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. Consider moving TVs to a common area so you can monitor your kids' screen time.

Just for fun

Q: What game has the losers going forward and the winners going backward?

A: Tug-of-war.



Gwinnett School Nutrition Program

Karen Crawford, MS, RD, CSP

Dinner date

Eating as a family is a good way to spend time together, and it also gives you a chance to make sure your teen or tween has healthy meals. Try these tips for bringing everyone together for meals.



Get kids involved

Give your teen a say in what's for dinner, and she'll look forward to eating it. Talk about what you're planning for meals, and ask her for suggestions. She can search online for a recipe using ingredients you have on hand. Let her help you cook or even prepare meals on her own. Guide her with ideas for serving balanced meals that include protein (beef, pork, chicken, beans), whole grains (rice, bread, pasta), and vegetables.

Pick a theme

Take turns choosing a monthly dinner theme (region, sports team, movie).

Then, work together to plan a meal around it. For a Hawaiian luau, top a pork roast with pineapple slices, and have a tropical fruit salad of bananas, mangoes, and papayas for dessert. If your favorite team's colors are red and yellow, you might have low-fat macaroni and cheese with sliced tomatoes.

Create a habit

Try eating together even when everyone is short on time. If you're too busy to cook, get healthy carryout food (salads, wraps), put it on real dishes, and sit at the table. Schedule dinner around game and work schedules when possible. *Idea:* Play background music or light candles to create a calm atmosphere. ♥

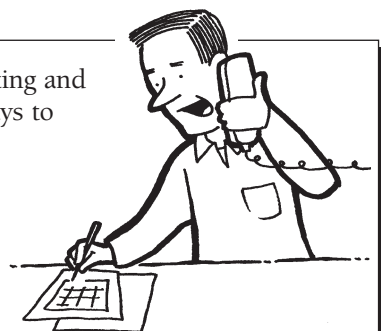
Volunteer for health

When parents get on board with nutritious eating and exercise at school, everyone benefits. Here are ways to volunteer—and show your child that supporting his school is worth your time:

- Serve on the school wellness committee. You might help set healthy cafeteria policies or organize a power-walking club or dance marathon for students.

- Support sports programs. As a parent representative for your child's team, you could arrange carpools, order team clothing, or plan an end-of-season party.

- Sign up for events. Schools often need volunteers for programs like Community Lacrosse Day or Spring Fitness Fair. Look through flyers your child brings home, or check the school Web site. ♥

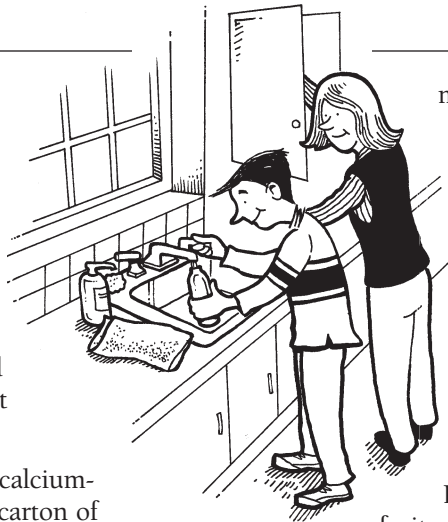


Sip smart

Many kids fill up on empty calories with soda. Try to encourage your teen to choose these drink options instead.

Water. Make it a family routine to drink water throughout the day. Serve water with meals, pack it on family outings, and remind your teen to fill a water bottle on his way out the door.

Milk. Teens need three servings of dairy or calcium-rich beverages a day, and an 8-oz. glass or a carton of



milk is an easy way to get one. If your child won't drink white milk, let him stir in a little chocolate or strawberry syrup—the added sugar is outweighed by the benefits of drinking milk. Kids with milk allergies or lactose intolerance can drink soy or lactose-free milk.

Juice. Choose only 100% fruit juice, and encourage your teen to do the same when he's out. Try tomato or vegetable juice. Your teenager might like it with a squirt of lemon or a dash of pepper. *Note:* Let your child know that the fiber in whole fruits and vegetables makes them healthier to eat than to drink. Suggest that he limit juice to a glass a day. ♥



Q & A

Time to eat

Q: My daughter's lunch period is at 10:30 a.m. Right after school she has track practice, so she doesn't eat again until dinner. How can she eat enough to keep her going all day?

A: First, be sure she has a filling and healthy breakfast to get her started in the morning. A simple bowl of whole-grain cereal with milk and berries will give her the energy she needs. Encourage her to choose a healthy lunch in the cafeteria or to pack a bag lunch that contains nutritious foods without high-fat chips or sugary desserts. Whether she takes or buys her lunch, have her pack snacks to eat between classes (if the school allows). Good choices for hallway snacking include low-fat granola bars, apples, or trail mix.



Finally, she can take a healthy snack (a peanut butter sandwich, string cheese and crackers) to eat a half hour or an hour before practice begins.

Fueling up throughout the day will help her go strong through school and practice. ♥

In the Kitchen

Pizza three ways

It's pizza—but hold the crust! Surprise your family with these three alternatives to the carryout favorite.

1. Salad

Combine tomatoes, grated skim mozzarella cheese, and your child's favorite pizza toppings (mushrooms, pepperoni, green peppers, onions) on a bed of mixed salad greens. Serve low-calorie Italian dressing on the side.

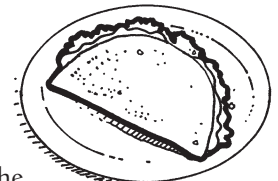
2. Pockets

Cook fresh baby spinach or a 10-oz. package of frozen chopped spinach, and stir in 1 tbsp. each of parmesan

and skim ricotta cheese. Stuff whole-wheat pita pockets with the mixture. Bake at 350° until the cheese melts, about 5–10 minutes.

3. Casserole

Combine 1 16-oz. can tomato sauce, ½ lb. cooked lean ground turkey, and 1 package cooked whole-grain penne pasta. Stir in ½ cup sliced mushrooms and 2 cups skim mozzarella cheese. Pour into a casserole dish, and bake at 350° for 30 minutes. ♥



ACTIVITY CORNER

Stay fit, help out

Turn household chores into workouts, and you'll give your child a sense of responsibility while keeping him moving.

Outdoor chores will change depending on the season. Whether it's shoveling snow, planting trees and pulling weeds, or raking leaves, your teen will burn calories and strengthen his muscles. He can also play fetch with the dog in a fenced-in

area or take him out for a walk or jog. Suggest that he team up with a friend who also has a dog—he'll have twice the fun!

Indoor jobs like sweeping, mopping, dusting, and vacuuming will keep your child moving. You can ask him to help with big jobs like washing windows, painting a room, or straightening up the basement or garage.

Tip: Suggest that he make an upbeat playlist on his iPod just for chore time. ♥



OUR PURPOSE

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

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128 N. Royal Avenue • Front Royal, VA 22630
540-636-4280 • rfeustomer@wolterskluwer.com
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