

Teen Food & Fitness

Healthy Ideas for Middle and High School Students

September 2016

Henrico County Public Schools
School Nutrition Services



FAST TAKES

Veg-out smoothies

Smoothies aren't just for fruit! Your tween can make a green version that includes vegetables, too. Have him put $\frac{3}{4}$ cup water into a blender, followed by 1 cup baby spinach leaves, 1 banana, and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup frozen mango chunks. Blend until smooth. *Tip:* Encourage him to mix and match other vegetables, perhaps peeled cucumber or zucchini, to find his favorite combinations.



Step it up

Digital step trackers can motivate your teenager to move more. Suggest that she check her smartphone for a step-tracking app (many include one), or she could download a free version. There are also inexpensive wearable varieties. *Idea:* Start a family challenge to see who tracks the most steps in a day, week, or month.

Did You Know?

A calorie is actually a measurement of energy, or the fuel your body needs to stay active and healthy. In other words, when a food has 100 calories, that's how much energy the body receives from it. So we all need calories—just not too many of them, and not empty ones like those from soda and candy.

Just for fun

Coach: Why were you late for practice?

Ashley: I was dreaming about our game, and it went into overtime!

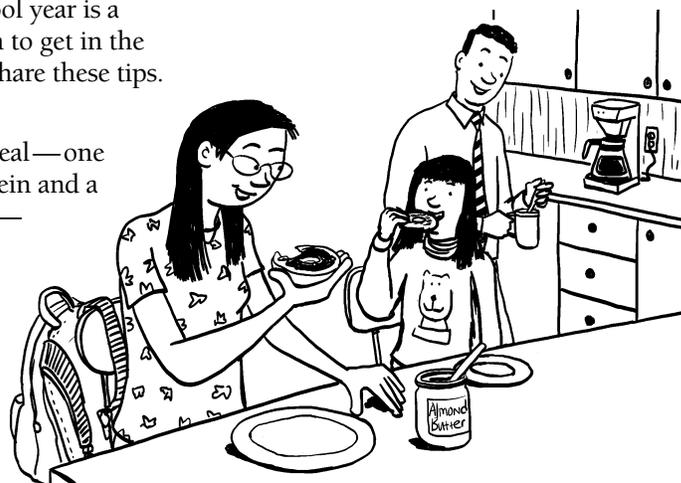


Healthy food routines

The start of the school year is a great time for your teen to get in the habit of eating better. Share these tips.

Have breakfast

Eating a balanced meal—one that includes both protein and a complex carbohydrate—will give your child energy and focus for her morning classes. Suggest quick breakfasts like almond butter on half of a whole-grain bagel or a slice of low-sodium deli turkey wrapped in a whole-wheat tortilla.



in the fridge so they're easy for her to grab when she heads out.

Double up on veggies

Vegetables add healthy nutrients to any diet. If your teenager buys lunch at school, recommend that she add an extra vegetable to her meal. Also, she could have veggies for snacks between classes or after school. Help her wash and pack carrots, snap peas, or broccoli pieces into snack bags. Then, store them

Eat slowly

It's not just what your child eats, but *how* she eats. It can take time for her body to tell her brain, "I'm full!" At dinner, encourage her to chew her food slowly and to take breaks by putting her fork down and sipping water. It will be easier for her to know when she's full, and she'll be less likely to overeat. ●

Smart reasons to break a sweat

Staying physically fit doesn't just boost your child's body, it's good for his mind, too. Give your tween or teen more reasons to exercise with these benefits.

1. Soothe stress. Exercise can help your teen feel more relaxed. After a long day at school, why not walk the dog or go for a run?

2. Lift your mood. Exercising raises the levels of chemicals in the brain that ease sadness and increase happiness. Working out to music is a particularly good way for your child to add physical activity and brighten his mood.

3. Improve memory. Studies show that exercise sharpens memory, which will make it easier for your tween to learn and do better in class. That's one reason PE is a good addition to every middle and high schooler's schedule. ●



Avoid the “health halo”

Some foods sound like they’re good for you even though they’re not. This information will help you and your child know the difference.

Energy bars. Sure, energy bars seem nutritious, and they can include helpful ingredients like fiber and protein. But many have the same amount of sugar as a candy bar! *Instead:* Suggest that he snack on a



handful of almonds or walnuts (about $\frac{1}{4}$ cup).

Muffins. While they may be advertised as “made with whole grain” or “filled with fruit,” muffins are often oversized and laden with sugar, fat, and calories. *Instead:* Make muffins that actually *are* healthy. Try adding more fruit, using less sugar, trading half the white flour for whole-wheat flour, or replacing half

(or even all) the oil or butter with applesauce.

Microwavable diet entrees. They’re definitely convenient, but these meals often have too much salt and not enough vegetables, whole grains, or fiber. *Instead:* Whip up a quick rice bowl with bags of frozen brown rice and frozen vegetables—just heat and serve. ●

ACTIVITY CORNER

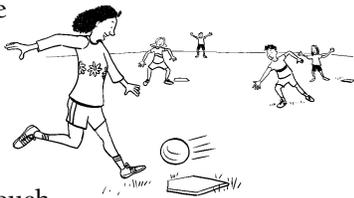
“If/then” workouts



Keep fitness fresh and fun with these ideas that match your teen’s workout to her situation.

● **If time is tight, then** suggest she split up her physical activity throughout the day. Have her develop 10-, 15-, and 30-minute exercise routines so she always has one to fit the time that’s available. *Tip:* She could write down each plan or enter them into her phone.

● **If the weather is beautiful, then** encourage your child to invite friends over for a game of touch football or kickball. When it’s too rainy, cold, or snowy, help her come up with indoor alternatives like following a dance video or going to the skating rink.



● **If your teen is bursting with energy, then** she may enjoy a high-intensity workout like boxing or sprinting. If she’s not feeling as peppy, she might start with a walk and work into a jog, or she could alternate 3–4 minutes of walking with 30 seconds of running. ●

Q & A Cut from the team

Q: My son didn’t make it onto his school’s soccer team. How can I console him but still inspire him to keep trying?

A: It’s so difficult when your teen has worked hard for something and doesn’t get it. First, acknowledge his hurt feelings and let him know it’s okay to feel bad. Try to share times you’ve experienced similar disappointments and what they taught you. Perhaps you took up tennis after being cut from the baseball team, and you still enjoy playing tennis today.

Then, talk to your son about what he wants to do now. Maybe he could enroll in a sports skills class to improve his chances the next time tryouts come around. He might consider joining a rec league so he can keep playing his sport. Or he may even decide to take up a different sport. By learning how to deal with disappointments now, he will be better able to navigate the ups and downs that come with life. ●



In the Kitchen Dinner in a jiffy

Add flavor without all the cleanup by making these recipes that use only one pot.

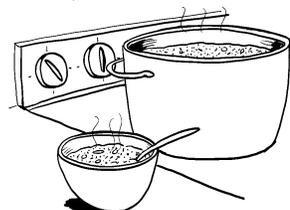
BBQ beans & sausage

In a large pot, heat $\frac{1}{2}$ tbsp. oil, and saute $\frac{1}{3}$ cup diced onions and 4 cups chopped collard greens (remove hard stems) until soft. Mix in 9 oz. sliced, cooked chicken sausage and 2 cans (15 oz. each, drained and rinsed) Great Northern beans. Mix together a sauce of $\frac{1}{2}$ cup barbecue sauce, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup water, 2 tbsp. tomato paste, and 1 tbsp.

molasses—and add to the pot. Heat through, about 3 minutes.

Cheesy-peasy fettuccine

Cook $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. high-fiber or whole-wheat fettuccine until tender. Drain, reserving $\frac{1}{3}$ cup of the pasta liquid. Return the liquid to the pot, and stir in 8 oz. light cream cheese (room temperature), $\frac{1}{3}$ cup grated Parmesan cheese, $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. garlic powder, and 2 cups frozen peas. When warm, toss with the pasta. ●



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.

ISSN 1935-8865