

Teen Food & Fitness

Healthy Ideas for Middle and High School Students

September 2014



FAST TAKES

Hungry or thirsty?

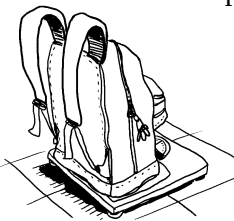
Our brains can't always tell the difference between hunger and thirst. Rather than grabbing a snack each time he thinks he's hungry, your teen might try drinking a glass of water. It's possible his body is actually just thirsty. He'll get hydrated—and keep from overeating.

Ignore the clock

The clock can make workouts seem longer than they are. Instead of watching how much time is left in an aerobics or Zumba class, your teen could focus on the instructor. Or if she's on a cardio machine (treadmill, stair-stepper), she might cover the timer with a towel and concentrate on her music playlist.

Did You Know?

Heavy backpacks add stress to growing spines.



Have your child weigh his book bag—it should be only 10–20 percent of his body weight. Suggest alternatives like leaving

books at home or in his locker when he doesn't need them. Also, he should wear both backpack straps to distribute weight evenly on his shoulders and back.

Just for fun

Q: What do you get when you cross a potato with an onion?

A: A potato with watery eyes!



Morningside High School - Dr. Reginald Sirls, Principal
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It's cool to be healthy

Getting healthy can be fun! Encourage your teen to build healthy habits—and to be a nutrition and fitness trendsetter—with strategies like these.

Positive peer pressure

It's hard to pass up fries or pizza when you're out with friends. Instead, let your teenager bring friends home for snacks or meals.

Shop together so you have healthy food on hand for impromptu get-togethers (vegetables and hummus, flavored seltzer water instead of soda). Another idea: She could steer her friends into activities where food isn't the focus, such as going for a hike or to a climbing wall.

New moves

Learning a new exercise each month will keep fitness fresh. Your teen can search online for cardio and strength exercises that interest her. Have her make a list of new exercises she wants to try, and she can check them off as she becomes a "pro." *Tip:* Let her teach you



the new exercises—she'll enjoy sharing what she's learned.

Encouragement

Suggest that your child make an "inspiration board" for healthy eating and fitness. She could search magazines and websites for uplifting and healthy messages and images. *Example:* "I may not be there yet, but I'm closer than I was yesterday." Then, she should assemble them on an online board or on a poster to hang in her room. Seeing these inspiring messages can keep her on the right track. ♥

Let your meals do the traveling

It's a big world out there, and food can help your teenager connect to new countries and cultures—an important skill in today's global workplace. Consider these suggestions.

Grocery store. Visit ethnic markets together. Encourage your teen to notice interesting products and ask the storekeeper questions. ("Where is this grown?" "How could I use it in a recipe?")

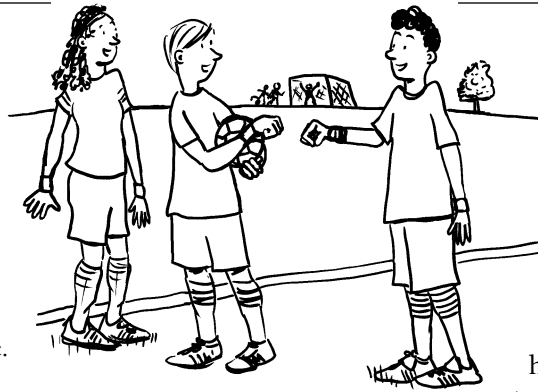
School travels. Talk with your child about the countries he's studying in history or social studies. Have him research their food and customs (like eating with their fingers or with chopsticks), and try them at home. ♥



Get your group on

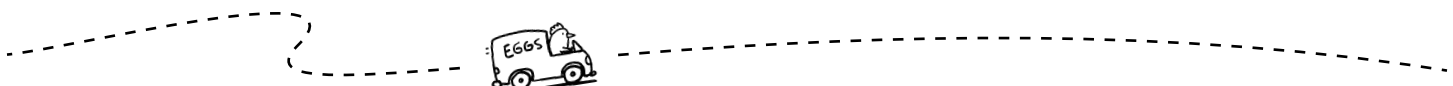
When your child blends fitness with friends, he's more apt to stick with the program. That's because working out with friends holds him accountable—and makes exercise part of his social life. Here are two ideas.

Join a team. Encourage your teen to try out for a sports team or to join a recreational league at his school or community center. If he's part of a team, he will be held responsible for



showing up and participating in practices and games. As a bonus, he'll get friendlier with kids who choose to be active in their free time.

Find your own. Discuss the types of physical activity he likes best. No matter what he chooses, there's a "group" way to do it. Even the more solitary sports like swimming and golf have teams. Or he could ask a few friends to set up a workout group or tennis round-robin. They can arrange to meet at the gym or tennis court a few times a week. He won't want to let his friends down by not showing up—or to miss out on the fun. ♥



Q & A Buying fish on a budget

Q: I've read that we should have fish twice a week, but it's expensive! How can I buy fish on a budget?

A: With a little planning, you can put fish and seafood on the table a few times a week without breaking your budget. Generally, white fish like tilapia and haddock will be cheaper than other varieties. Keep an eye out for seasonal offerings or specials in the fish section, and ask when to expect sales on your favorites.



Look beyond the fresh fish counter, too. Frozen fish can be less expensive—and it's just as healthy. Also, canned fish (tuna, salmon, sardines) is a more economical option. Choose tins that are low in sodium and packed in water. Finally, you can hold costs down by watching portion sizes (one serving of fish is 3 ounces). ♥

ACTIVITY CORNER

On your mark...

Running is a great way to build fitness and to learn to set personal goals. Start your child on the path to running with these steps.

- 1. Find a mentor.** Have her reach out to a relative or neighbor who runs. An avid runner will probably be happy to share his knowledge and may even offer to run with your tween. Athletic stores often sponsor running programs with volunteer coaches who can provide guidance, too.
- 2. Make a plan.** Suggest that she create a calendar with the days she'll run and her target times or distances (she can find guides in running websites or magazines). Remember, developing a new exercise program takes time. She should start slow and work her way up to longer times or farther distances.
- 3. Choose a race.** There's nothing like the applause of a crowd to spur her on. Encourage your teenager to sign up for a 5K race a few months away. Then, be sure to cheer her home at the finish line—unless, of course, you're running it yourself! ♥



In the Kitchen

After-school fuel

Pair fruit with yogurt, nuts, or granola for protein to keep your kids energetic and focused for homework and after-school activities.

Yogurt berry bark

Spread nonfat yogurt in a dish, and press blackberries or raspberries throughout. Freeze for one hour, and break off pieces for a healthy bark.

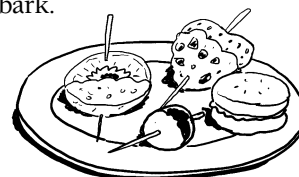
Dipped fruit sticks

Take strawberries, kiwi, grapes, or other fruits your teen likes, and skewer them with toothpicks. Dip

one end in fat-free yogurt and then in granola, chopped nuts, or even shaved chocolate.

Frozen PB & banana sandwiches

Spread 1 tsp. peanut butter between banana slices to make a sandwich. Dip into nonfat yogurt, and freeze for an hour. Store in the freezer in a zipper bag. *Note:* If your child is allergic to peanuts, substitute another nut or seed butter like almond or sunflower. ♥



OUR PURPOSE

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

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