

# Teen Food & Fitness

Healthy Ideas for Middle and High School Students

September 2021



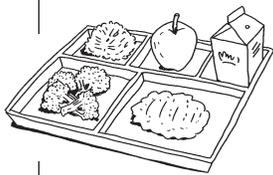
## FAST TAKES

### Pick a card

For a fun workout, have your child name an exercise to go with each suit in a deck of cards (diamonds = sit-ups, hearts = jumping jacks). In spare moments, take turns drawing a card and doing the exercise the number of times shown. *Example:* Get a six of diamonds, do six sit-ups. Then tomorrow, change up the exercises.

### Did You Know?

Today's cafeteria meals include more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains than ever before. Have your teen look over the menu on the



school website or on the sheet sent home so he can make healthy choices for the next day.

*Idea:* Ask him to suggest new foods he enjoyed in school to try at home.

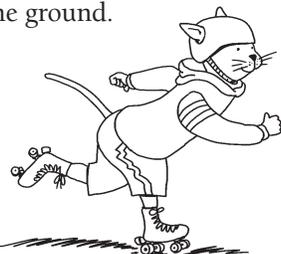
### Grab a banana

Bananas are a kid favorite—and a nutrient powerhouse. They're packed with potassium and magnesium, which promote a healthy heart and healthy bones. They're also a good source of fiber and vitamins C and B6. Encourage your teen to snack on bananas or add them to smoothies.

### Just for fun

**Q:** What is the hardest thing about learning to roller skate?

**A:** The ground.



## More veggies, please

*Mom:* Jeff, you need to eat more vegetables.

*Jeff:* But Mom, I had french fries and onion rings today!

Does your child think that these fried foods count as his daily vegetables? You can change his thinking by encouraging him to prepare vegetables in healthy ways that he'll like. Here are a few ideas.



### Leave them raw

Crunchy vegetables are fun to eat—and to dip. Have your teen put out a platter of raw bell pepper slices, green beans, and sugar snap peas for an after-school snack or as a side dish with dinner. He could include a healthy dip like hummus or salsa.

Suggest that he toss his salad with a little olive oil and vinegar. *Idea:* Turn the salad into a main course by adding tofu or cooked chicken, beef, or shrimp.

### Stir up some soup

A big batch of homemade vegetable soup makes a comforting meal. In a large pot, your teenager can combine 2 cans low-sodium vegetable broth, 2 cups water, 1 can diced tomatoes, and 4 cups vegetables (perhaps sliced carrots, potatoes cut into chunks, canned corn, and frozen okra). Simmer for an hour or until the veggies are tender. ♥

### Make a chopped salad

Your child has probably noticed these popular salads on restaurant menus. Let him whip up one at home by chopping romaine lettuce, cucumbers, celery, zucchini, tomatoes, or other vegetables into small pieces.

## Turn study time into active time

Combining outdoor activity with homework and studying is a win-win for your teen—she'll learn as she stays active.

**Take homework to the park.** Have your child pack up her books and do assignments at a picnic table. When she's ready for a break, it's easy to take a quick walk around the park.



**Dribble and learn.** Encourage her to add activity to studying. For example, she could write facts or test questions in chalk on a sidewalk or driveway. Then, she can dribble over each one while she memorizes formulas or answers questions. ♥

# What does the food label say?

Your tween or teen can tell how healthy a food is, and decide whether to eat it, by reading the label. Share these tips for making sense of the information.

## Check out the percentages.

Discuss the numbers on labels while the two of you look at some of your child's favorite foods. She might reconsider potato chips, for example, if she sees that a single-serving bag has close to a third of her daily fat and sodium intake. Point out that fat, cholesterol, sodium, carbohydrates, protein, and vitamins are listed in



grams (g) or milligrams (mg), along with the percentage they provide in a 2,000-calorie-a-day diet.

**Go for nutrients.** The label will also tell your teen whether foods are rich in nutrients (the good stuff!). As a rule of thumb, more than 20 percent of a daily serving is excellent for a nutrient, 10–19 percent is good, and less than 10 percent is low. For instance, an 8-oz. glass of milk gives her 30 percent of her daily calcium and 25 percent of vitamin D. *Note:* For foods without a label, like produce, she can find the information on store signs or online. ♥



## PARENT TO PARENT I'm always hungry!

My teen, Mia, recently started saying she was always hungry—and she was worried she would put on weight if she kept eating. I reminded her that the doctor said at her checkup that her appetite would shoot up as she went through growth spurts.



Mia asked her volleyball coach for healthy snack ideas and came home with a good list. Her coach suggested whole grains like popcorn and multigrain cereal,

dairy products such as fat-free milk and yogurt, proteins like hard-boiled eggs and sunflower seeds, and, of course, fruits and vegetables.

She keeps the list in her phone, and now Mia knows what to grab when she's hungry. She feels better knowing she's following a plan, and I hope she won't be as concerned about gaining weight. ♥

## ACTIVITY CORNER Hunt for treasure

Geocaching is a modern-day treasure hunt that will have your teen roaming through parks and hiking to new destinations—all while following GPS to find a prize. To play along, he can join with family or friends and follow these steps.



1. Register on [geocaching.com](http://geocaching.com) to get a list of "caches" (containers of treasures) in your area. The website rates the difficulty level for both the terrain and how deeply the cache is hidden.
2. Use a GPS app to navigate to the cache. Most are hidden so passersby wouldn't see them, maybe under a rock or inside a hole in a tree trunk. Caches contain small, inexpensive trinkets like a toy car, pencil, or marker.
3. When he finds the cache, he signs the logbook inside, takes the treasure, and leaves a trinket for another geocacher. Now hike to the next treasure! ♥

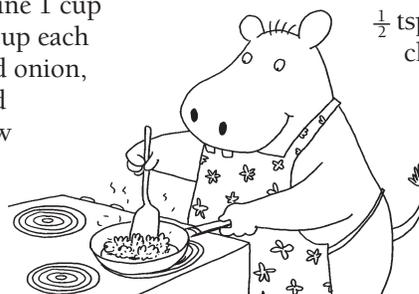
## In the Kitchen New ways to eat old favorites

Favorite foods can be deconstructed into new dishes. The familiar flavors will appeal to your teen, and he'll experience something new! Try these.

**Burger salad:** Combine 1 cup shredded lettuce,  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup each diced tomato and red onion, 2 tbsp. low-fat grated cheddar cheese, a few pickle slices, and a chopped-up burger or meatless patty. Toss with 2 tbsp. low-fat ranch.

**"Eggroll" in a bowl:** Heat 1 tbsp. sesame oil in a skillet, and brown 1 lb. lean ground pork. Stir in 1 16-oz. bag coleslaw mix, and cook 5 minutes.

Season with salt and pepper,  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp. ground ginger, 3 cloves minced garlic, and  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup low-sodium soy sauce. Cook another 5 minutes. Top with sliced green onions. (Makes 4 servings.) ♥



### 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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