

Teen Food & Fitness

Healthy Ideas for Middle and High School Students

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Herington USD 487

Stephanie Stover, Food Service Director



FAST TAKES

Hungry...or bored?

Boredom can lead to mindless snacking. Before your tween reaches for a snack, encourage her to check in with her body. Is her stomach growling? How would she rate her hunger on a scale of 1–10? If she decides she's just bored, she might go for a run or do a craft instead.

Choose active extracurriculars

Give your teen a way to stay fit and get involved in student life by encouraging him to put fitness-related extracurriculars on his schedule this year. He could try out for one sport each season. Or he might join a club that meets all year, such as the Ultimate Frisbee or outdoor adventure club.

Did You Know?

Mushrooms are a good source of three different

B vitamins. Plus, their hearty flavor makes them an ideal meat alternative

in dishes like stroganoff, lasagna, or sloppy joes. Simply replace half (or all) the meat with finely chopped

mushrooms, and cook as usual.



Just for fun

Q: Why did the coach want the kangaroo on the basketball team?

A: Because he was good at jump shots.



Back to school with healthy habits

Eating right and getting enough exercise and sleep will make your tween or teen healthier—and help him do better in school. Share these tips for starting the new year with healthy routines.

Make breakfast ahead of time

A nutritious breakfast will help your teen focus in class. If busy mornings cause him to skip breakfast, suggest that he prep food the night before. He might hard-boil eggs to eat with whole-grain toast. Or he could layer nonfat yogurt and fresh or frozen fruit in a glass, cover his “parfait” with foil, and refrigerate overnight.

Get outside daily

Kids who spend time outdoors tend to be more fit. Offer to play catch with your tween after work. Or encourage him to start or join pickup games at the local



basketball court. *Idea:* For a surefire way to get outdoors five days a week, your teen could walk or bike to and from school with friends, if possible.

Sleep for success

With enough sleep (at least 8–10 hours each night), your teenager will have more energy for learning and physical activity. Have him establish a relaxing routine that helps him get to sleep around the same time each night. For instance, he could put away screens an hour before bed and listen to music or read. ●

Motivated to move

Is your teen getting at least 60 minutes of exercise each day? Help her find the motivation to get or stay active with these strategies.

● **Buddy up.** Planning physical activity with friends can keep your teenager accountable. Plus, shared workouts are an excellent time to catch up in real life (rather than by text or on social media). She and a friend might make up dance routines or practice soccer drills.

● **Perfect the playlist.** Why watch the clock when she can work out with a musical “timer”? Your teen could make a playlist to match the length of her workout. Suggest that she put slower songs at the beginning and end for warming up and cooling down, then pack the middle with upbeat songs to get her heart pumping! ●



Better than takeout

Pizza and burgers and fries, oh my! Try these ideas for helping your teen make nutritious and creative versions of popular carryout dishes at home—she'll save money *and* calories.

● **Pizza.** Keep whole-grain naan or pita bread in the house so your teenager can whip up a healthy pizza any time. She could try different sauces, cheeses, and toppings—then name her creations. Maybe she'll make "BBQ Pit Pizza" with



low-sodium barbecue sauce, leftover chicken, shredded cabbage, and low-fat cheddar.

● **Burgers.** Your tween will look forward to burger night at home when she invents her own "secret" burger sauce. Let her experiment with condiments (low-fat mayonnaise, spicy mustard, hot sauce) to find a combination she likes. Then, serve lean turkey burgers on whole-wheat buns with lettuce, tomato, and her secret sauce.

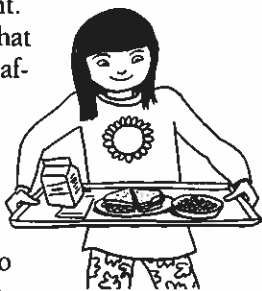
● **Fries.** Help your teen make her own delicious *and* nutritious fries in the oven. She should cut peeled baking potatoes into strips, toss with olive oil and her favorite seasoning (Old Bay, rosemary), and bake at 450° for 35 minutes, or until golden and crispy. ●

PARENT TO PARENT

Excited about school lunch

My daughter Tara started a new school this year, and she wanted to pack lunch to make sure she'd have food she liked. I'd rather she get lunch at school, since it will be healthier—and certainly more convenient.

I suggested that we look at the cafeteria menu to check out the choices. Tara found lots of options that sounded good to her like chicken



wraps and vegetable lo mein. The menu also included unfamiliar but interesting foods, such as broccoli and cheese nuggets and bean empanadas. Best of all in her eyes, there was a salad bar.

Tara is realizing that cafeteria meals give her a bigger variety of healthy options than packing—and getting lunch in school sure makes mornings easier. ●



ACTIVITY CORNER

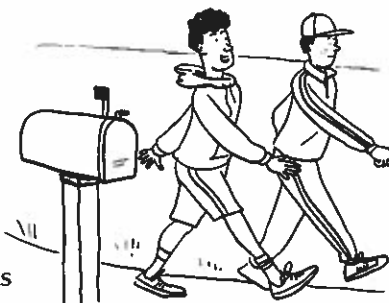
Step it up

Everyday activities like enjoying a good book and checking the mail are great opportunities for your teen to get in more steps. Share these suggestions.

● **Listen and learn.** Your teenager can walk around a track or on a safe trail while he listens to an audiobook or an interesting podcast.

● **Take study breaks.** Between subjects or chapters, your teen could walk up and down the stairs of your home or apartment building.

● **Head to the mailbox.** Put your teenager in charge of checking the mail, and suggest that he take a loop around the block while he's at it. Also, instead of emailing friends or relatives, he could write actual letters—then take another trip to the mailbox to send them. ●



In the Kitchen

Lettuce-less salads

Inspire your teen to explore vegetables other than lettuce as the star of his next salad.

Corn, avocado, and tomato

Dressing: 2 tbsp. olive oil, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup lime juice, salt, pepper

Salad: 1 cup corn (fresh or frozen), 1 pint cherry tomatoes (halved), 1 small diced avocado, 2 tbsp. crumbled feta cheese

Brussels sprouts and apple

Dressing: $\frac{1}{4}$ cup olive oil, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup fresh lemon juice,

1 tbsp. honey, salt, pepper
Salad: 1 lb. thinly sliced

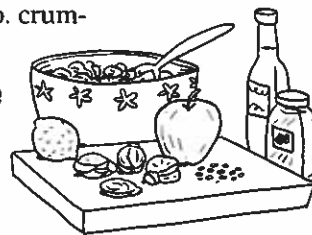
brussels sprouts, 1 thinly sliced Fuji apple, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup sunflower seeds

Roasted carrot and parsnip

Dressing: 1 tbsp. olive oil, $\frac{1}{2}$ tbsp. apple cider vinegar

Salad: 4 roasted carrots, 4 roasted parsnips, 4 cups raw spinach, and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup chopped walnuts. (To roast, peel and

cut carrots and parsnips into 1-inch pieces. Toss with 2 tbsp. olive oil and a pinch of salt and pepper, and bake 35 minutes at 425°.) ●



OUR PURPOSE

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

Resources for Educators,
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128 N. Royal Avenue • Front Royal, VA 22630
800-394-5052 • rfeustomer@wolterskluwer.com
www.rfeonline.com

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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