

Teen Food & Fitness

Healthy Ideas for Middle and High School Students

FAST TAKES



Cafeteria plan

Variety is the name of the game in today's school cafeterias.

Encourage your child to take advantage of healthy offerings, such as salad bars, fresh fruit, whole-wheat pizza, and turkey tacos. Drinking fat-free milk will add extra protein and calcium to his meal.



Jump for it

Jump ropes aren't just for little kids! Suggest this quick routine to your teen. For one minute each: jump as fast as possible, jump side to side, jump forward across the room, jump backward, and alternate hopping on each foot. Repeat three times for a 15-minute workout.



Did You Know?

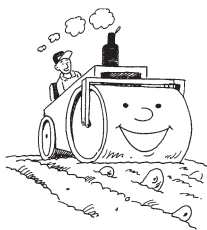
More teens are overweight now than at any time in American history. In all, about one in three middle and high school students are considered obese or overweight. Reduce your children's risk by helping them get more exercise, eat sensible portions, and avoid high-fat and high-sugar foods.

Just for fun

Steven: Why did the farmer drive a steamroller over his potato fields?

Marcus: I don't know. Why?

Steven: He wanted to grow mashed potatoes!



Snack attack

Your child needs snacks to keep his body going strong all day long. What he doesn't need is extra sugar or fat! Try these ideas to get your teen or preteen in the habit of healthy snacking.

Stock up

Give your child nutritious choices by keeping a supply of fresh fruits (apples, bananas, cantaloupe) and vegetables (baby carrots to dip in low-fat ranch dressing, baking potatoes to microwave and top with low-fat cheese). *Other ideas:* low-fat granola bars, instant oatmeal, low-fat strawberry yogurt.

Choose healthy

Many foods are available in healthier versions these days. Look for baked chips rather than fried, air-popped popcorn instead of oil or butter varieties, whole-wheat pretzels, and reduced-fat crackers.

Plan ahead

Keep healthy snacks ready for teens on the go. Wash seedless grapes, and freeze in baggies. Make up bags of trail mix: combine whole-wheat cereal, unsalted nuts, and dried cherries. Get individual-sized snacks, such as apple-sauce cups or boxes of raisins. *Note:* Taking snacks along will help keep your child from stopping for junk food.



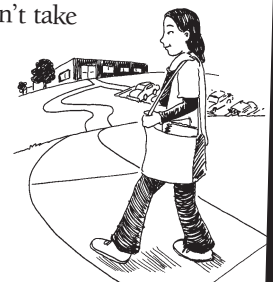
Mix foods

Show your teen how to make snacks healthier by combining food groups. For example, he can melt shredded low-fat cheddar cheese on whole-wheat bread (two minutes in the toaster oven set at broil) to get calcium, protein, and grains all at once. ●

Five easy steps

Encourage your children to add more steps—and burn more calories—by making these simple changes in their daily routine:

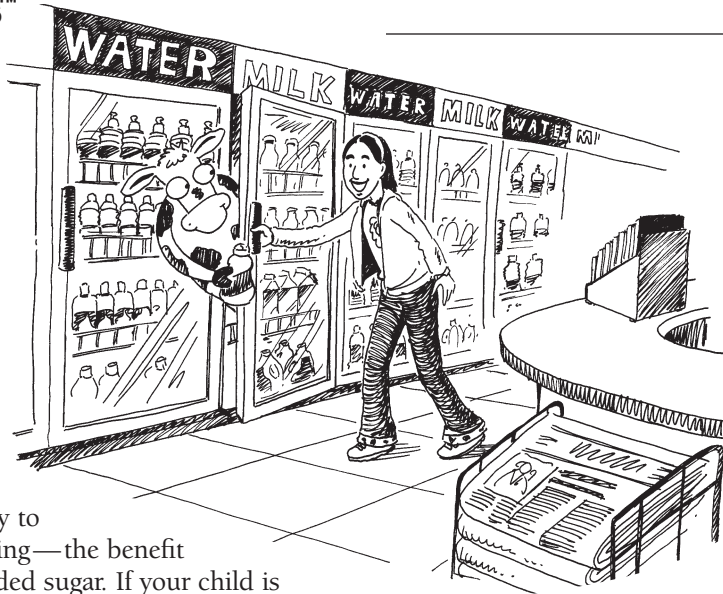
1. Park farther away from the entrance to the library, mall, or community center.
2. Take the stairs rather than the escalator or elevator when shopping or going to doctor appointments.
3. Get off the school bus one stop early and walk the rest of the way home. *Note:* To stay safe, walk with a friend, use sidewalks, and don't take shortcuts.
4. Do active chores: take the garbage out, vacuum, put away clutter.
5. Bike or rollerblade to a friend's house after school. ●



Drink healthy!

The next time your teen wants a soda, tell her this: a typical can has 10 teaspoons of sugar—more than in a chocolate bar! Try to steer her to these healthy choices instead.

★ **Milk** provides calcium, vitamins, and nutrients that kids need. Encourage your tween or teen to drink three cups a day. Keep the milk fat-free, but it's okay to add chocolate or strawberry flavoring—the benefit of drinking milk outweighs the added sugar. If your child is allergic to milk, try calcium-enriched soy or rice milk. If she's lactose intolerant, get lactose-free milk.



★ **Water** is the best all-day drink. It has no sugar or calories and is low-cost. Take water bottles in the car and to sports games and practices. Try serving water with meals at home and asking for it when you eat out. You can add flavor with a lemon slice. *Note:* Seltzer, club soda, and sparkling water are good alternatives. Like water, they have no sugar or calories, and they have the “fizz” factor kids like. ●



Q & A Video game overload

Q: My child spends so much time playing video games. How can I get him to be more active instead?



A: First, consider setting limits (say, 30 minutes) on how much time your teen can spend on gaming. Together, schedule when he can play—for instance, in the evening after homework. If

possible, put the video system in the family room so you can monitor his playing.

Second, encourage your son to be active at least an hour a day. See if you can play off his video game interests. Does he like martial arts games? Suggest a karate class. If he's into sports games, he could sign up for baseball or football. If he loves virtual skateboarding, take him to a skateboard park. He just may find the real thing more exciting! ●

ACTIVITY CORNER

Exercise—and get paid

High school students and middle graders can gain work experience, earn spending money—and get exercise—in these part-time jobs.

● **Babysitter.** Encourage your teen to play active games (hide-and-seek, Twister, tag, catch) while caring for small children. Ask neighbors if they need help.

● **Sports helper.** Youth teams need referees and assistant coaches. Teen coaches get exercise practicing with the team, while refs get a workout running up and down the field or court during games. Contact your recreation department or school athletic department for openings.

● **Camp counselor.** After-school programs and summer camps use tweens and teens as junior counselors. Check your local YMCA or community center, private schools, and area camps. ●



In the Kitchen

Make it Mexican

Mexican food is extremely popular with young people today. These quick and healthy versions are good from morning to night.

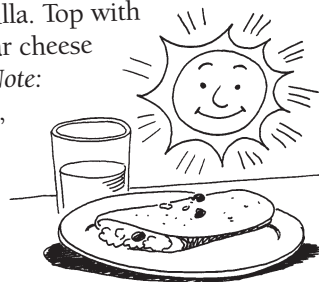
Breakfast burrito. Scramble 2 eggs, ¼ cup fat-free milk, and a diced red pepper in a skillet (coat with non-stick cooking spray). When set, spoon onto a whole-wheat tortilla. Top with shredded low-fat cheddar cheese and salsa, and roll up. *Note:* Make it the night before, and microwave for a fast breakfast.

Fiesta lunch salad. Toss together shredded lettuce, diced

tomatoes, canned corn, and canned black beans. Add a dressing of ¼ cup low-fat sour cream blended with ¼ cup store-bought guacamole. Sprinkle with baked tortilla chips.

Layered enchilada dinner. Pour canned red enchilada sauce into a 9 x 13 inch casserole, and line with corn or whole-wheat tortillas.

Top with browned lean ground beef and shredded low-fat Monterey Jack cheese. Repeat layers. Bake at 400° for 15 minutes. *Vegetarian option:* Omit the meat, or substitute refried beans. ●



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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Teen Food & Fitness™ is reviewed by a registered dietitian. Consult a physician before beginning any major change in diet or exercise.