

Teen Food & Fitness

Healthy Ideas for Middle and High School Students

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The Lawson Academy

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FAST TAKES



Walking family huddle

For your next family meeting, take your talk to the sidewalk. Your teen might map out a route, maybe including some hills for a more vigorous walk. Switching up your environment may spark new ideas, whether you're making plans or discussing a problem.

Pumpkin spice season

This time of year, pumpkin spice seems to be everywhere. Have your tween mix up this homemade version for a less expensive, and less sugary, way to add fall flavor to steamed milk or hot oatmeal. In a jar, he could



combine 3 tbsp. cinnamon, 2 tsp. each nutmeg and ginger, 1 ½ tsp. allspice, and ½ tsp. cloves.

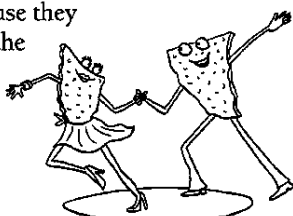
Did You Know?

Kitchen sponges often harbor billions of bacteria. These bacteria can get onto your plates and increase the risk for food poisoning. Ask your teen to help keep sponges clean and dry. She should add them to the dishwasher's hot cycle or microwave damp sponges for 1 minute and allow them to dry. And remember to replace them regularly.

Just for fun

Q: Why did the tortilla chips start dancing?

A: Because they put on the salsa!



Dare to try new foods

Help your teen channel her adventurous spirit in a healthy way by trying new foods. Use these tips to get started.

Take initiative

Your teenager is more likely to consider ideas she comes up with herself. Encourage her to choose different fruits and vegetables from the store or farmers' market, and ask her to look up or think of simple ways to serve them. She might find a new twist on spaghetti squash or Swiss chard that appeals to her—and then make it for dinner.



has seen in classmates' homes. She could ask her friends for tips on preparing them.

Skip the fork and spoon

Your teen may want to experience new foods if she can eat with a piece of flatbread, chopsticks, or her hands! Try wrapping tabbouleh with lettuce in warm pita bread or naan. She can eat a cucumber salad or a tofu stir-fry using chopsticks. Or maybe she'd like to sip broccoli and cheese soup from a mug for a utensil-free meal. ●

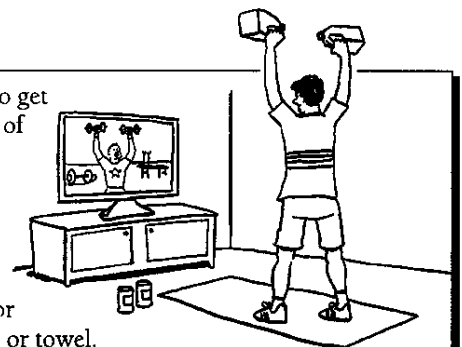
Go on a culinary journey

Check out ethnic stores or the international aisle of your grocery store. What looks interesting to your child? Let her pick out items like curry paste, rice noodles, or seaweed sheets—and look at the packages for recipe suggestions. Or perhaps she'll notice foods she

Set up a home gym

Your tween can create a home gym to get into a workout routine and feel a sense of accomplishment.

Pick a spot. He should choose a space with room for activities like push-ups and squats. It might be a corner of the basement or the middle of the family room. A carpeted floor will work fine, or he can add a yoga mat, carpet remnant, or towel.



Equip it. Suggest that your child use soup cans (unopened) or water-filled milk jugs for weights. Have him check neighborhood bulletin or online boards and thrift stores for free or used equipment like dumbbells and resistance bands. He could also stream free exercise classes on a phone, computer, or TV. ●

Smart shopping

You are what you eat! Remind your teenager of this to encourage him to shop for healthy options at the supermarket. Here are some suggestions.

● **Take a shopping list.** Before going to the store, make a list together. Discuss meals for the week, and ask your child to check what you already have in the pantry and refrigerator. Using a list helps you both resist impulse—and perhaps unhealthy or expensive—purchases.



● **Read labels.** Model healthy shopping behavior by reading packages. Check for sodium and sugar on nutrition labels, comparing choices to find the options with the lowest numbers. Also, have your teen notice the order of ingredients, because they are listed by amount (highest to lowest).

If sugar is listed first, for example, the item has more sugar than anything else.

● **Don't shop hungry.** Going to the grocery store on an empty stomach is a recipe for buying more than you intend. Try eating a healthy snack or meal before heading out to shop. ●

Q & A Weekday vs. weekend eating

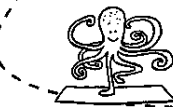
Q: My son Jack tends to eat healthy foods during the week but more junk food on weekends. How can I get him to make good choices on the weekend?

A: It's often easier to stick to regular meals and healthier eating during the week when kids have a school routine. With more time on his hands on weekends, it's easy for your son to get off track.

Help him be more mindful of what he's eating by creating categories for "always foods" (fruits, vegetables) vs. "sometimes foods" (cookies, chips). Another idea is for him to keep a food diary. Jotting down what he eats each day

gives your son an easy way to compare his weekday and weekend diets.

Finally, suggest that he make healthy snack bags, perhaps sunflower seed and dried cherry trail mix or popcorn tossed in chili powder. Having these on hand will put healthy options within reach when he's hungry on weekends. ●



ACTIVITY CORNER

Hit the basketball court

Challenge your teen to get creative on the basketball court with these three ideas.

1. Passing practice. It's fun to pass the ball behind your neck, around your waist, or under each leg. Suggest that she invite a friend along to practice these moves together.

2. Shot-clock race. Encourage your teenager to set a timer and count how many free throws or jump shots she makes in 1 minute. Can she beat her record next time?

3. Dribbling drills. Solo or with friends, your teen could dribble the ball to half court and back, then full court and back. She might try dribbling different ways, too: low, backward, or through her legs. ●



In the Kitchen

Slow cooking = easy meals

Let the slow cooker do the work with these nutritious main-course recipes.

Salsa chicken

Place 2 lbs. boneless, skinless chicken breasts into the slow cooker, and top with 2 cups salsa. Cook on low 6–8 hours. Shred the chicken with a fork, and fold into whole-grain tortillas.

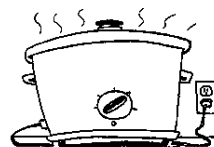
Spinach ziti

Spray the inside of the slow cooker with nonfat cooking spray. Add 1 lb. uncooked ziti, 6 cups low-sodium marinara sauce, 1 cup water, 16 oz. skim ricotta cheese, and

4 cups fresh spinach. Stir until noodles are coated with sauce, then top with 1 cup shredded mozzarella. Cook on low 3–4 hours, until the pasta is tender.

Red beans and rice

In the slow cooker, combine 2 15-oz. cans red beans (drained, rinsed), 3 chopped celery stalks, 1 chopped onion, 1 chopped green bell pepper, 2 bay leaves, 1 tbsp. each paprika and garlic powder, $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. cayenne pepper, and 2 cups low-sodium vegetable broth. Cook on low 4–5 hours. Remove the bay leaves, and serve over cooked brown rice. ●



OUR PURPOSE

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

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