

# Teen Food & Fitness

Healthy Ideas for Middle and High School Students

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Gwinnett School Nutrition Program  
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## FAST TAKES

### Quench your thirst

On summer days, your tween can drink *and* “eat” water to stay hydrated. Many fruits and vegetables, such as strawberries, cucumbers, watermelon, zucchini, grapefruit, and cantaloupe, are more than 90 percent water. Suggest that he snack on them during sports practices or when he plays outside.

### Healthy celebrations

Make physical activity the star of special occasions! Let your teen organize a flag football game or go roller-skating with her friends to celebrate the beginning of summer. On Independence Day, your family could run a 5K or play kickball.



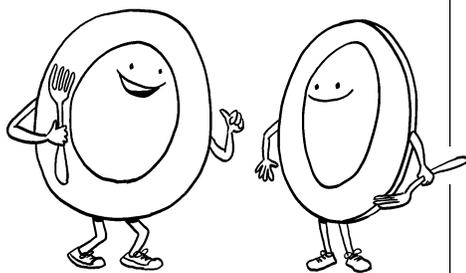
### Did You Know?

Our bodies absorb more iron from beans and leafy green vegetables if they're eaten with foods high in vitamin C. Your child might combine diced red bell peppers with black beans, make a pineapple and spinach smoothie, or toss mandarin oranges into a green salad.

### Just for fun

**Q:** What did one plate say to the other?

**A:** Lunch is on me!



## Have a healthy summer

Summer is filled with tempting food options—some more nutritious than others. These strategies will help your teen or tween dodge common pitfalls and stay on track.

**Summer challenge:** Less structure

**Summer solution:** Eat regularly. Sticking to a routine makes it easier for her to avoid mindless munching throughout the day. Have your child eat 3–5 meals and snacks, starting with a healthy breakfast (vegetable omelet, oatmeal with berries).

**Summer challenge:** Cookouts and potlucks

**Summer solution:** Make smart swaps. Hot dogs and mayonnaise-based side dishes may say “summer,” but they're full of sodium and fat. Encourage your teen to put grilled chicken on a whole-grain bun and top with mustard and pickles. Also, consider bringing a tray of raw veggies to share so you're guaranteed a healthy side.



**Summer challenge:** Day trips and vacations

**Summer solution:** Plan ahead. At fairs or festivals, scan all the food offerings to pick the most nutritious ones (soft pretzels, veggie kebabs). For longer trips, stock your car or hotel room with options like fresh fruit and hard-boiled eggs. And suggest that your tween read online menus to find the healthiest restaurants at your destination. ♥

## More active at work

Whether your teenager works standing up or sitting down, he can move more on the job. Share these ideas:

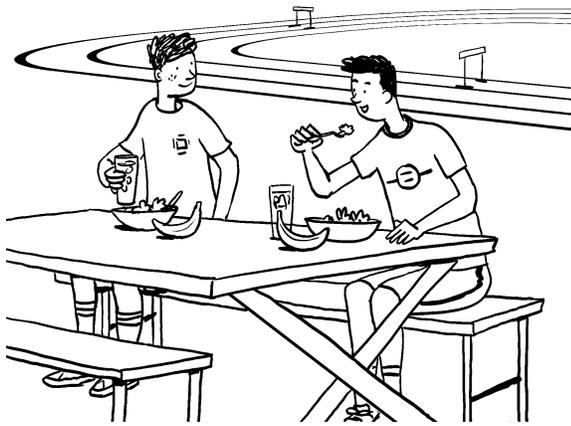
- If your teen supervises children, encourage him to play active games with them. They'll love having him join their relay races or games of tag.
- A lifeguard might swim laps during breaks or before his shift. He'll cool off—and the exercise will make him more alert in his chair.
- A teenager who sits in an office could walk to and from work (or park far from the entrance if he has to drive). He can also go for walks during breaks and take the stairs rather than the elevator. ♥



# Nutritional benefits, naturally

Your teen may see ads for products that promise weight loss or bigger muscles. But there's no substitute for healthy eating, and these supplements may in fact be harmful. Suggest better approaches to getting the same benefits.

**A healthier weight.** Have your teenager fill half his plate with fruits and vegetables, avoid added sugar



(soda is a major culprit!), and get at least one hour of physical activity each day. Those habits go a long way toward promoting a healthy weight—and overall good health. *Caution:* Diet pills and shakes may cause side effects like rapid heart rate and high blood pressure.

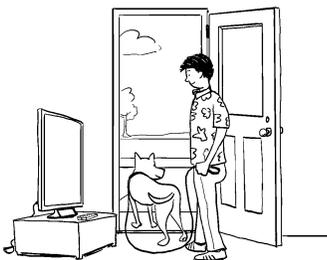
**Stronger muscles.** To keep muscles strong, your child should choose healthy proteins

like lean fish and chicken, beans, and nuts. Drinking a glass of protein-rich fat-free milk after a workout is a great way to help muscles recover. *Caution:* Bodybuilding powders can disrupt hormones in growing teens. Plus, they're unnecessary—most kids get enough protein naturally, and any extra won't make his muscles bigger. ●

## Q & A TV binge-watching

**Q:** When my son Randall finds a TV series he likes, he wants to watch the whole season right away. How can I keep him from binge-watching?

**A:** Now that entire seasons or even series are available on demand, binge-watching has become popular. Unfortunately, that leads to lots of sitting and possibly binge-eating—an unhealthy combination.



Work with Randall to set limits on how many episodes he can watch each day. And share this trick: Turn off your streaming site's auto-play option. Having to choose to play the next episode instead of letting it start automatically may make it easier for him to step away.

Finally, suggest that he watch an episode after a healthy meal or snack so he isn't tempted to eat during the show. ●



## ACTIVITY CORNER

### Backyard games

There are lots of opportunities for physical activity right in your backyard. Here are two games your teen can play with her friends.

● **No-net volleyball.** Use a clothesline as a volleyball net, or create an imaginary boundary, such as a "line" between two trees. Then, hit a playground ball or a balloon back and forth over the net. *Idea:* Play Newcomb, where players catch the ball and throw it back.

● **Crazy hockey.** Set up an obstacle course with items like buckets, cardboard boxes, and soccer cones. Give each player a small ball and a hockey stick. Time each person hitting her ball around the obstacles and across a finish line. The player with the fastest time wins. ●



## In the Kitchen Fiesta night

Lighten up your family's Mexican-style favorites with these easy recipes.

### Bell pepper nachos

Place four seeded, quartered bell peppers cut-side down on a sheet pan sprayed with nonstick cooking spray. Bake at 400° for 15 minutes. Flip, top with low-fat shredded cheddar, and broil 2–3 minutes until cheese melts. Add diced tomatoes, shredded lettuce, and black olives (halved, pitted).

### Chicken avocado tostadas

Heat eight 6-inch whole-grain tortillas on a baking sheet at 350° for 10 minutes,

or until crisp. Each person can top her tostada with leftover chicken, avocado, and salsa.

### Black bean-stuffed sweet potatoes

Cut four sweet potatoes in half. Place halves, cut-side down, on a lightly greased baking sheet. Bake at 425° for 30 minutes. Scrape the flesh into a bowl, and stir in 1 can black beans (drained, rinsed), ¼ tsp. chili powder, and salt to taste. Divide the mixture evenly among the skins, and broil 3–4 minutes, until heated through. ●



## OUR PURPOSE

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

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