

# Teen Food & Fitness

Healthy Ideas for Middle and High School Students

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## FAST TAKES

### Concussions: Know the signs

Tweens and teens who play a contact sport like football, ice hockey, or soccer are at risk for concussions. Symptoms, including headache, nausea, dizziness, and sensitivity to light, don't always show up right away. That means your athlete should tell an adult immediately after any blow to the head so he can be tested for a concussion.

### Did You Know?

Just 15 minutes of daily meditation is thought to improve memory and reduce stress. This may lead to better performance



in school and a calmer child at home. Your teen could meditate anytime simply by

sitting silently and focusing on her breathing. Or she might search online for meditation apps.

### Easy on the cheese!

As an excellent source of protein and calcium, cheese can be a healthy snack. But it's also high in fat and calories. Keep your tween from overdoing it by having him aim for a 1-oz. serving (about the size of two dice). For shredded cheese, he could use a loosely packed  $\frac{1}{4}$ -cup measure — that's about 1 oz.

### Just for fun

**Q:** If you were running a race and just passed the person in second place, what place would you be in?

**A:** Second place.



## The magic of family meals

Celebrate Family Meals Month by making a commitment to eat healthy foods together. You'll help your teen maintain a healthy weight, eat a more nutritious diet, and develop better lifelong food habits. Plus, you'll connect as a family. Consider these strategies.



### Involve your child

Get her excited about preparing and eating nutritious meals. You might give her a weekly mission to find a recipe that uses seasonal produce. Or let your teenager plan a theme night like "Food Truck Friday," featuring healthier versions of food truck favorites like street corn (swap yogurt for mayo) or grilled cheese sandwiches (use whole-wheat bread).

### Set an example

Mealtime is a chance for parents to demonstrate healthy eating. Studies show that people pick up the eating habits of those they share meals with. That means

seeing you pile vegetables on your plate, take a small portion of meat, and choose fruit instead of cake for dessert can be contagious!

### Take time to talk

Discuss nutritious foods to help your tween learn about them. You could challenge everyone to guess the ingredients and describe the flavors in each dish. Try to keep the conversation pleasant by mentioning nice moments from your day and avoiding topics that cause tension. This helps your teen have a good attitude toward family meals. ●

## Make the most of the stairs

Taking the stairs can get your tween's heart rate up, strengthen muscles, and burn double the calories of walking on a flat surface. Use these tips to help him step it up.

**Start a habit.** When you're out and about, urge the whole family to seek out the stairs. In a tall building, you could walk up as far as possible and ride the elevator the rest of the way. Or take breathers by stopping on landings.

**Use household stairs.** Encourage your child to walk up and down the stairs in your house or apartment building when he needs a break from homework or chores.

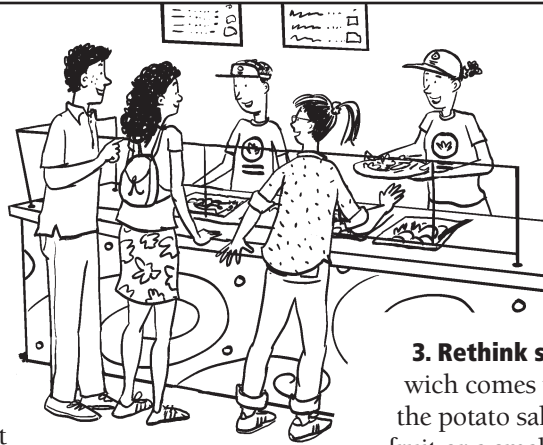
**Visit the track.** The school bleachers are ready-made for running steps. Have everyone start simply: Run up a set, jog across the top row, then jog down. ●



# Fast, casual, and healthy

Fast casual restaurants tend to offer bigger selections of nutritious ingredients than fast food chains. Here's how your teenager can make the best decisions at these places.

**1. Plan ahead.** Ask your child to search for fast casual menus online that include whole grains or focus on vegetable dishes. He might find a burrito joint that has whole-wheat tortillas and brown rice or a place that specializes in salads or stir-fries.



**2. Watch out for extras.** Even the most nutritious flatbread sandwich or noodle bowl will be high in fat if your tween loads it up with ranch dressing or fried chicken. Encourage him to customize his orders with extra veggies or grilled chicken instead.

**3. Rethink sides.** If your teen's barbecue sandwich comes with a side dish, he might replace the potato salad or mac 'n' cheese with fresh fruit or a small salad. Or suggest that he top tacos with salsa and a spoonful of guacamole rather than sour cream and queso.

*Tip:* Restaurant portions can be huge, so your child could eat half and save the rest for the next day. ♡

## Q & A Positive body image

**Q:** My son Liam compares himself to taller boys at school and "buff" guys on TV and then complains that he's smaller. How can I help him?

**A:** First, reassure your son that how he feels is normal. Then, remind him that his body is unique and will change over time. Also, point out that just because a TV star looks muscular doesn't mean he's healthy.



Encourage your child to focus on his strengths (he's a whiz with technology, for example). You might also brainstorm ways to get more exercise. Maybe he can start doing push-ups and squats. Or he could take up an activity like karate or racquetball. Let him know the goal isn't to get "buff," but to be strong and healthy.

Finally, avoid talking negatively or excessively about your size—or other people's—around him. This will help him learn not to focus on appearance. ♡



## ACTIVITY CORNER

### Getting to 60 minutes

Your teen should get at least an hour of exercise each day to help her stay healthy. But she doesn't have to do it all at once. Share these ideas for breaking up activity into bursts.

**10 in 10.** Together, create a deck of 10-minute workouts on index cards. Write an exercise on each ("Jump rope," "Do burpees"). Then, pull out a card, and do what it says whenever you have 10 minutes.

**15-minute circuit.** Visit a baseball diamond, or set up bases in your yard. Starting at home plate, walk or run to first, run backward to second, lunge-walk to third, and hop to home. Then, do a plank (with forearms and toes on the ground and back and legs straight), holding 30–60 seconds. Repeat the circuit for 15 minutes.

**30-minute trips.** Map out destinations that take 30 minutes by foot or bike. Choose places you enjoy visiting, such as the library or the park, or incorporate errands like a grocery run. ♡



## In the Kitchen

### Bowls: Sweet, savory, or both!

Your tween will be bowled over by these fun recipes.

#### Sushi roll in a bowl

For each bowl, use  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup cooked brown rice, and drizzle with 1 tsp. rice vinegar. Add  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a cucumber (diced),  $\frac{1}{3}$  of an avocado (diced),  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup cooked tofu (cubed), and 1 tsp. sesame seeds. Top with sriracha and 1 crushed nori (seaweed) snack sheet, if desired.

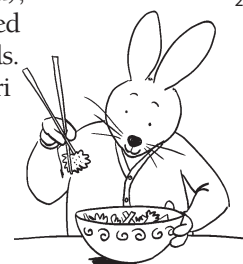
#### Pumpkin pie oat bowl

Mix  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup canned pumpkin puree into 1 cup cooked oatmeal. Sprinkle with  $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp. pumpkin pie

spice (or cinnamon), 1 tbsp. raisins, 1 tbsp. pumpkin seeds, and  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp. maple syrup.

#### Pineapple tuna bowl

Combine 1 cup salad greens with  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup cooked quinoa,  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup canned tuna (packed in water, drained),  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup fresh pineapple chunks, and 1 tbsp. chopped red onion. Add a squeeze of fresh lime juice before serving. ♡



## OUR PURPOSE

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

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