

# Teen Food & Fitness

Healthy Ideas for Middle and High School Students

November 2008

Family and Consumer Science Dept  
Home and Career Skills

## FAST TAKES

### Serving sizes

Help your child understand what a healthy serving looks like. Ask her to pour her breakfast cereal into a bowl.

Then, have her read the nutrition label and measure out an actual serving ( $\frac{3}{4}$  cup, 1 cup) into a second bowl.

Using a measuring cup a few times will get her used to healthy serving sizes.



### Did You Know?

Teens are doing much less physical activity than younger children. Building an exercise routine as a teenager will help your child maintain healthy habits throughout his life. Urge your teen to set aside regular workout times, and help him stick to his plan by supporting him and exercising along with him.



### Make it green

Green tea is getting more popular, and with good reason. It's lower in caffeine than coffee or regular tea, and it has healthy antioxidants. Try making iced tea out of green tea bags at home. Or suggest a hot green tea drink when you and your teen go to the coffee shop.

### Just for fun

**Q:** What do you call a week-old sandwich?

**A:** A science experiment.



## Nutrition know-how

Learning about nutrition can steer your child toward a healthier lifestyle. What's more, it might spark her interest in science, motivate her to do research, or even land her in a health- or food-related career. Consider these suggestions.

### Explore science

Cooking can help your tween or teen understand chemistry. Suggest that she visit [www.exploratorium.edu/cooking](http://www.exploratorium.edu/cooking) and choose a kitchen experiment. Maybe she'll discover what makes bread rise or how beating a raw egg makes meringue. Seeing chemical reactions firsthand will help her connect with the science she is studying in school.

### Research issues

Is your child considering going meatless, or does she want to eat more organic foods? Encourage her to research these choices with library books, magazines, or Web sites. She might explore the benefits of a vegetarian diet or find out why organic products often cost more.

### Active and safe

Keep your teen or tween safe while exercising, and help him prevent injuries, with these tips:

■ Use proper equipment. Helmets are essential for biking, and helmets, wrist guards, and knee pads are all needed for skateboarding and rollerblading. Add mouth guards for contact sports like football and hockey, and wear bright clothing while running.

■ Warm up and cool down. Jogging in place and stretching (toe touches, side bends) will increase flexibility. Cooling down is important to relax the body after a workout.

■ Let injuries heal. If your teen gets hurt, be sure he follows his doctor's advice. Remind him that working out too soon might mean a longer recovery in the end. ♥



Researching the questions will give her the information she needs to make good decisions.

### Choose careers

Doctors and dietitians give people advice about what and how to eat. Chefs and school cafeteria managers need to understand nutrition to select ingredients or plan menus. Your teen can try out fields like these by working in a restaurant, getting an internship in a community health clinic, or taking a cooking class through the county recreation department. She'll learn more about nutrition, and she just might find a future career! ♥

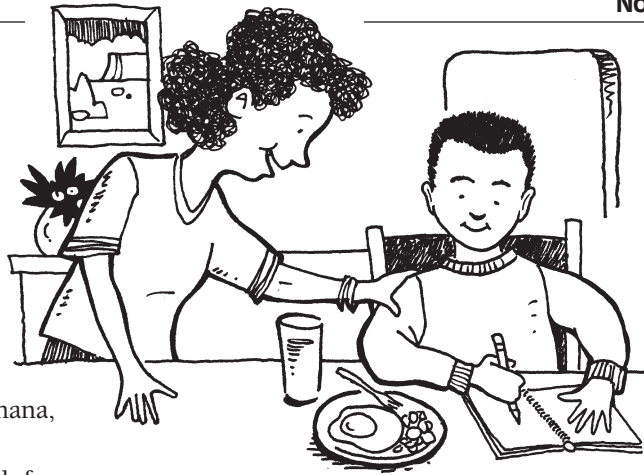


# Food journals

Between on-the-go snacks and dining out, your teen may not eat as well as he thinks he does. Keeping a food journal is a great way to see exactly what he eats so he can improve his diet. Try this four-step plan:

**1.** Give your child a spiral notebook. Ask him to write down what he has for every meal and snack for a week. *Example:* “8 a.m. — bagel with light cream cheese, 1 banana, 8 oz. orange juice.”

**2.** After a week, read his journal together. Look for patterns: Is he getting five to nine servings of fruits and vegetables each day? Does he grab a candy bar and soda after swim practice?



**3.** Help him plan two or three diet changes. He might decide to add one vegetable serving a day. For instance, he could substitute carrot sticks for fries with his burger. Or he could carry protein bars and bottled water in his

swim bag so the vending machine won't tempt him.

**4.** Encourage him to keep a journal for another week. He can choose new things to change for an even better diet. ♥



## ACTIVITY CORNER

### At-home exercise

Looking for easy and low-cost ways to create a gym at home? Here are some ideas:

● Get a large cardboard box or plastic container for storing your family's exercise equipment. You may be surprised by what you already have around the house, such as a large ball, a jump rope, or a kitchen stool for doing step aerobics.

● Look through magazines or search online for exercises for each piece of equipment. You and your teen can write ideas on index cards. *Example:*



“Lie on your back, bend your knees, and rest your legs on the ball. Lift your hips up, and roll the ball back and forth with your legs.”

● Check out exercise videos from the library, or record workout programs on television. These can help your teen get new fitness ideas, from Pilates to kickboxing. ♥

## In the Kitchen

### Fruit treats

Summer may be long over, but these fruit dishes are never out of season. Try them—they'll add vitamins and fiber to your child's diet.

#### Quick 'n' easy applesauce

Making your own apple or pear sauce is easy, and it needs no added sugar. Peel and cube apples or pears. Simmer about 20 minutes in a covered pot with a cinnamon stick and several tablespoons of water. Stir frequently, remove from heat, and mash until chunky or smooth.



#### Berry tasty pancakes

Frozen fruit tastes fresh year-round. Add frozen blueberries, raspberries, or cranberries to whole-grain pancake mix, or top waffles or French toast with thawed, sliced strawberries.

#### Fruity meals

Surprise your teen with unexpected splashes of fruit. Add cubed pineapple to stir-fries, put orange segments on top of grilled fish, or cut grapes and add them to rice or coleslaw. ♥

## Q&A Coping with celiac disease

**Q:** My son was just diagnosed with celiac disease. It seems like he can't eat anything. What should we do?

**A:** People with celiac disease can't digest gluten, a protein found in wheat and other foods. And since many foods contain wheat—even chicken nuggets coated in bread crumbs—adjusting to the diet may be tough at first. But with planning, your

son will be able to find substitutes for his favorite foods.

Many grocery stores and health food stores now sell gluten-free products, such as rice-flour pasta and muffins.

You can also find products online (search “gluten-free products” on a search engine like Google or Yahoo).

To make it easier for your child to eat out with friends, collect take-out menus from popular restaurants. Look them over together to help him find things he can order. ♥



### OUR PURPOSE

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

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