

Teen Food & Fitness

Healthy Ideas for Middle and High School Students

March 2021

Towns Country Schools



FAST TAKES

Blot your pizza

Here's a quick way for your child to cut fat and calories from pizza. Suggest that he pat the top with a napkin or paper towel to soak up the grease. With this simple trick, he will skim $\frac{1}{3}$ of the fat from each slice. The pizza will be just as tasty—or maybe more so without all that grease.



Take a seat

Wall sits help strengthen your teen's quads and hamstring muscles and boost her overall strength. Share these instructions: With your back against a wall and feet shoulder width apart, squat to a 90-degree angle. Hold 30–60 seconds. Repeat up to 5 times.

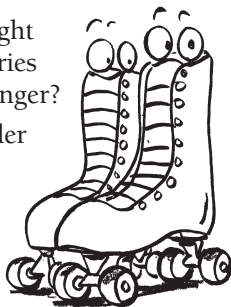
Did You Know?

Carbohydrates sometimes get a bad rap, but they're essential, especially for growing teens. The key is to choose healthy carbs like whole grains and starchy vegetables (sweet potatoes, butternut squash, parsnips) instead of carb-rich foods with refined sugars, such as white bread and cake.

Just for fun

Q: What has eight wheels but carries only one passenger?

A: A pair of roller skates.



Fast food refresh

Your teen's definition of fast food probably includes burgers and fries. Flip the way she thinks about "fast food" with these healthy options that are ready in a jiffy.

"Friend" the microwave

Your child can microwave healthy food faster than she can hit the drive-thru. Let her pick out frozen vegetables that cook in the bag. Some varieties even include protein (black beans, lentils) or grains (quinoa, barley). Or she could scramble eggs in the microwave. Have her whisk 2 eggs in a bowl, add a splash of milk, and heat 2 minutes on high, stirring halfway through.

Find no-cook options

Stock up on foods that don't need to be cooked, such as your teen's favorite salad fixings, canned tuna (packed in water), and whole-wheat pita pockets. She might whip up an entrée-sized salad with baby spinach, grape tomatoes, canned chickpeas (drained, rinsed), and crumbled feta cheese. Or she could stuff a pita pocket



with tuna, mashed avocado, and low-fat shredded cheddar.

Prep in advance

Set aside time each week to do "food prep" together. You and your child could rinse and chop bell peppers and onions for a stir-fry, form turkey burger patties for burger night, or bake and slice chicken for pasta. There will be less work when dinnertime rolls around—and you'll both be less tempted to order fast food. ♥

I want to be a runner!

Your tween or teen can decide to be a runner anytime, even if he thinks he's not particularly fast or can't run far at first. Share these strategies.

Get started. Encourage him to look for a training plan online, download a training app, or ask for advice from a friend or relative who runs. If he's a new runner, a "couch to 5K" plan may appeal to him. He'll alternate running and walking and gradually progress to all running.

Stay motivated. Suggest that your child sign up for a virtual or in-person race so he'll have a goal to work toward. He could also find a running buddy. They can check in regularly and cheer on each other's progress. ♥



Create a family cookbook

Food is an important—and delicious—part of a family's heritage. Encourage your child to make a cookbook of your family's most treasured recipes. Here's how.

Collect. Your teen could ask relatives for their recipes, including photos if possible. They might choose special dishes served on holidays or everyday favorites. Or maybe they'll share recipes they remember from childhood.



Organize. Your tween can copy and paste all the recipes into a computer document, then add any photos. He may want to sort the recipes by category (appetizers, entrées, sides, desserts) or by meal (breakfast, lunch, dinner).

Share. Let your child upload the document to a file-sharing site like Google Drive or Dropbox and send relatives the link. Or he could print out copies to mail to everyone.

Enjoy. Now he could host a meal, virtually or in person. Each family member can make one or more recipes from the book and tell stories about their recipes as they eat. Maybe his aunt has fond memories of making baba ganoush with her grandmother—who remembers making it with *her* grandmother. ♡

Q & A Eating disorders: Know the signs

Q: My son isn't overweight, but he's obsessed with counting calories. Could he have an eating disorder?

A: An obsession with calories is one sign of an eating disorder, but it's usually not enough for a diagnosis.

Bring up your concerns with your son. You might say, "I've noticed you're counting calories. What brought that on?" Then, gently explain that focusing on eating healthy foods is a better long-term strategy for staying at a healthy weight. If he eats plenty of fruits and veggies, whole grains, lean protein, and fat-free or low-fat dairy, he's doing a good job of eating well.



At the same time, keep an eye out for other signs of eating disorders, such as losing weight, mood swings, lightheadedness or fainting, dry skin and hair and nails, or dental problems. If you notice any, contact his doctor. ♡

OUR PURPOSE

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

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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.

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ACTIVITY CORNER

High-intensity workouts

With an easy-to-follow workout, your child can get in on the CrossFit craze without the gym. These moves will give her a quick, intense exercise routine.

Box jumps. Stand in front of a step. Using both feet, squat slightly, then jump onto the step and back to the floor. Work up to 10–20 repetitions.

Tabata. Do push-ups for 20 seconds, rest for 10 seconds, and repeat 7 more times. Tabata refers to a high-intensity workout of 8 intervals (any kind of exercise, rest) in 4 minutes.

Combos. Ladder repetitions, or working down from a high number to a low one, are common in CrossFit. Try a 10-5-1 combination: 10 high knees, followed by 5 squats and 1 high knee. Eventually, go higher with a 21-15-9 combo (21 high knees, 15 squats, 9 high knees). ♡



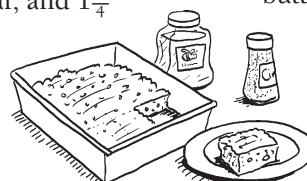
In the Kitchen

Homemade granola bars

Store-bought granola bars can have a lot of added sugar. Instead, try the following recipes using a parchment-lined 8 x 8 baking dish.

Raisin spice

In a bowl, combine 2 cups rolled oats, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup raisins, 2 tbsp. each ground flaxseed and pumpkin pie spice, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup brown sugar, and $1\frac{1}{4}$ cup almond milk. Pour into pan. Bake 45 minutes at 375°. Remove from pan, cool and slice.



Oat-cherry

Stir together 2 cups instant oats, 1 cup sunflower seed butter, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup sunflower seeds, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup dried cherries, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup honey in a bowl. Press into pan. Freeze 1 hour before slicing.

Puffed rice

Heat $\frac{1}{3}$ cup honey with $\frac{3}{4}$ cup peanut butter until melted. Stir in a pinch of salt, $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. vanilla extract, and 3 cups puffed brown rice cereal. Layer in pan. Refrigerate 1 hour, and slice into bars. ♡