

Teen Food & Fitness

Healthy Ideas for Middle and High School Students

September 2020

Wylie Independent School District



FAST TAKES

Staying hydrated

Your teen may be used to carrying a water bottle with him when he's on the go—encourage him to keep one with him at home, too. He can fill up before he sits down to do schoolwork and refill when he takes breaks.

Tip: Serve water with family meals.



Rock, paper, scissors—go!

Turn this classic competition into an active game. Players stand on one leg, then display “rock,” “paper,” or “scissors.” The winner picks a 1-minute workout for everyone to do, such as holding a plank pose or running laps. Now balance on the other leg, and see who will win the next round and choose another quick workout.

Did You Know?

Though it's popular, on-and-off fasting to lose weight is not recommended for tweens and teens. If your child announces she's fasting, explain that skipping meals prevents her from getting all the nutrients she needs to grow. *Note:* If she's overweight, ask her doctor for advice.

Just for fun

Q: What's the best thing you can put into a muffin?

A: Your teeth!



Pantry cooking

Want to take fewer trips to the grocery store, save money, and waste less food? You can do all of that—and help your teenager learn to shop smart—with these strategies for making the most of what's in your kitchen.

Stock up on staples

Ask your teen to look through grocery advertisements for sales on basics like rice, pasta, jarred pasta sauce, and dried or canned beans. Then, buy extra if your budget and space allow. Also, encourage her to research how long different fruits and vegetables last to decide whether to buy fresh or frozen. For instance, you can keep fresh apples, cabbage, and carrots for weeks in the fridge.

First in, first out

Have your child arrange food by expiration date, perhaps by putting new containers of yogurt behind ones approaching the use-by date. When she's looking for something to eat, she'll be more likely to take what's in front. She should also check the date on the



next item—if it's coming up, try to eat the food soon, or freeze it if you can.

Be creative

Encourage your teen to think of ways to use what's in the house. Before the lettuce wilts, she could make lettuce wraps instead of sandwiches. If you have a lot of canned fruit, she might suggest cooking pork topped with pineapple chunks or tossing mandarin orange slices into a salad or stir-fry. ♡

Fit in fitness as you learn

Doing homework doesn't mean your child has to sit in the same spot hunched over his work. He can mix in some movement with these ideas.

● **Set a timer.** Have your tween use his phone alarm, smartwatch, or smart speaker to remind himself to move every 30 minutes. He might shoot baskets in the driveway or play Frisbee with the dog. The exercise breaks will add up throughout the day!

● **Work smart.** Suggest that your teen rethink sitting at a desk. Instead, he can sit on an exercise ball. Or he could put his laptop on a stack of books (so it's eye-level) and stand at his desk. Both alternatives burn more calories and will give him more energy. ♡



Mindfulness matters

Slowing down and being mindful while eating helps your teen tune into his hunger and fullness cues—and makes him less apt to overeat. Suggest these strategies.

Put away screens. Encourage your child to avoid snacking while watching TV or playing on his phone. Instead, have him eat snacks only at the table. He'll pay attention to his food instead of his screen.



Practice together. Try this five-senses exercise to discover what mindful eating feels like.

1. Hold an orange in your hand. Move it around and notice how it feels. Is it firm or soft? Smooth or bumpy?
2. Close your eyes, and smell the orange. Does it have a strong citrus scent?
3. Look at the orange. Is it a bright shade of orange, or is it yellowish?
4. Peel the orange, taking in the sounds and new aromas in the process.
5. Taste a piece of the orange. Is it sweet or tart? Is it bursting with juice?

Slow down and enjoy. It takes 20 minutes for your brain to alert your stomach that you're full. Your child can give his stomach time to get the message by swallowing each bite before taking another. At family meals, remind each other to put your forks down between bites. ♡

ACTIVITY CORNER Virtual workouts

Being apart doesn't have to mean exercising alone. Your teen can work up a socially distanced sweat with these ideas.

Take online classes. Suggest that your child continue activities she loves like yoga or strength training. She could also explore new options, such as circuit training or Zumba. *Tip:* Check your local recreation center or search YouTube for free options.



Exergame it. Instead of sitting to play video games, your teen can choose an active game. She might dance to popular songs, play tennis, or try fitness boxing.

Buddy up. Have your child and a friend challenge each other to walk, jog, or bike a set number of minutes or miles per week. They can share photos of themselves in action or swap screen shots from their fitness apps. ♡



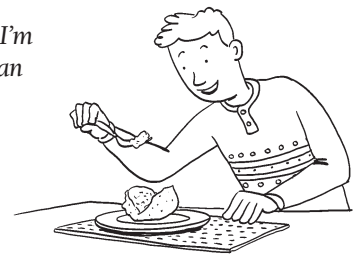
Q & A The scoop on saturated fat

Q: I recently read about saturated fat, and now I'm worried that my son eats too much of it. How can I help him cut back?

A: The first step in cutting back on saturated fat is knowing where it lurks. It's highest in foods that come from animals, such as butter, cheese, and red meat. Saturated fat is also found in fried foods and baked goods because they usually contain butter or hydrogenated oils.

If your teen eats red meat like ground beef or steak, he should choose the leanest option available. Even better, have him switch to lean ground turkey or skinless chicken breasts, which are low in saturated fat. For dairy products, your son's best bets are low-fat cheese and nonfat milk and yogurt.

Also, encourage your child to limit fried foods. He might eat a baked potato or baked zucchini sticks rather than french fries, for instance. And point out that fruit makes a tasty dessert—with no saturated fat! ♡



In the Kitchen Nutritious dips

Forget the French onion or buffalo chicken dip...your child can whip up these lighter, healthier dips in no time. Serve with raw vegetables.

Curried carrot

In a blender, puree $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. cooked carrots with 1 tbsp. olive oil, 2 minced garlic cloves, $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups nonfat Greek yogurt, 2 tbsp. fresh lemon juice, and curry powder to taste.

Mango guacamole

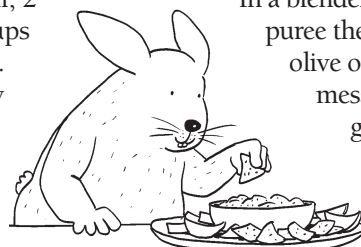
Mash 3 ripe avocados with $\frac{1}{2}$ cup minced red

onion, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup chopped cilantro, $\frac{1}{2}$ diced jalapeno, a splash of fresh lime juice, and cumin to taste. Toss in 1 cup mango chunks.

Parmesan edamame

Cook 12 oz. frozen shelled edamame.

In a blender or food processor, puree the beans with 1 tbsp. olive oil, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup grated Parmesan cheese, and $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. garlic powder. For a smoother dip, drizzle in more olive oil. ♡



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.

ISSN 1935-8865