

Teen Food & Fitness

Healthy Ideas for Middle and High School Students

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Morgan County School Nutrition Program
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FAST TAKES

Game day

Taking your tween to high school sports games is fun and can inspire her to stay active. While you watch, you might point out that players have to practice regularly and eat healthy foods to stay in shape. *Idea:* Offer to play the sport with your child after watching the game, or suggest that she play with friends.

Did You Know?

Fruits and vegetables should always be rinsed before cooking or eating. That includes melons, oranges, and other produce with inedible skin—cutting through the rind can bring bacteria inside. Teach your teen to rinse produce under running water while rubbing it with his hands or scrubbing with a vegetable brush.



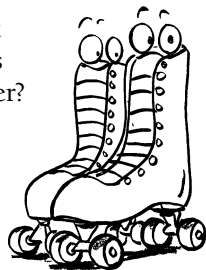
Toning legs

Share this exercise for strengthening thigh muscles. Lie on your back with bent knees (6 inches apart), feet flat, and arms down at your sides. Lift your hips until your body is straight, from your shoulders to your knees. After holding for 3–5 seconds, lower your hips back to the floor. Work up to 15 repetitions.

Just for fun

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

A: A pair of roller skates.



Better fast food

If school breaks mean more fast-food runs at your house, take heart. While you don't want to encourage a steady diet of these meals, there are ways to make them healthier. Here's how.

Choose ahead

Checking nutrition stats in advance can help your teen have a meal in mind when he walks in—and keep him from being tempted by the menu board. Suggest that he use the create-a-meal section on his favorite chain's website. Seeing how the numbers change as he adjusts serving sizes and toppings can inspire him to make healthier selections. *Note:* This planning is especially helpful if your child has food allergies, diabetes, or other health concerns.

Avoid meal combos

It's easier to skip the fries and soda if your teen ignores "value" and "supersize" options. While they might seem like a good deal, the larger portions will cost him in extra calories and fat. Instead, encourage him to get a smaller burger and fill up with healthy sides like a plain



baked potato, a yogurt parfait, or apple slices. Also, suggest that he drink water, fat-free milk, or unsweetened iced tea.

Be picky about toppings

Healthy sandwiches and even salads can quickly become unhealthy when you add the wrong toppings. Let your teen know that mustard is a better bet than mayonnaise and "special sauces" for sandwiches, and suggest that he add lettuce, tomatoes, and onions rather than bacon and cheese. For salads, he might skip the croutons and fried toppings and order extra veggies and light dressing. *Idea:* Have him try low-fat ranch dressing on his burger or salsa on his salad. ♡

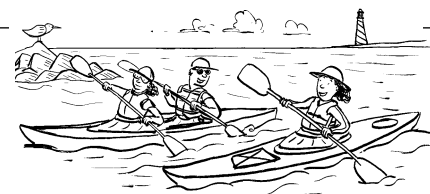
Family outings

Looking for family activities that are full of fun and fitness? Try these ideas.

Kayaking. Your parks and recreation department may offer summer classes, such as how-to courses on canoeing and kayaking. They'll provide the equipment and training—you take the muscle!

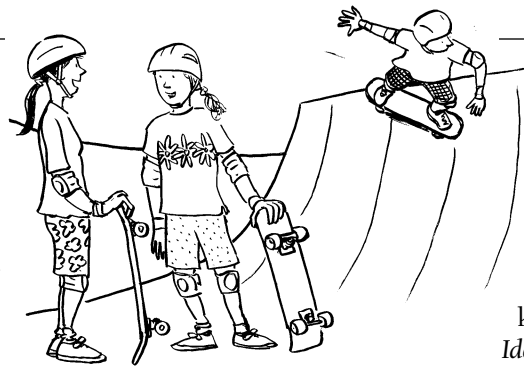
Biking. Check for bike trails in your area, or find safe routes through neighborhoods or parks. If you don't have bikes or a bike rack, look for a bike rental place nearby.

Touring. See if your city has walking tours of historic districts and neighborhoods. Your family can hear stories and learn about the area. *Tip:* If you can't find tours, create your own by looking online for interesting places to explore on foot. ♡



Avoid summer weight gain

With extra time on their hands, some teens may become less active and eat more over the summer. Consider these suggestions to keep your kids from falling into that trap.



1. Name an ambition. Teens might spend more time in front of a screen (TV, computer, video games) because they can't think of anything else to do. Help your children figure out something active to pursue over the summer, like learning to skateboard or becoming a better lacrosse goalie.

2. Stick to a schedule. When kids get out of their school routine, they might start going to bed late, eating meals at odd

times, or skipping meals—all of which can lead to over-eating. Encourage your teens to set an alarm for a reasonable wake-up time and to keep to a regular schedule.

Idea: Have them write down the next day's plan, including wake-up and meal times, before going to bed at night.

3. Go easy on eating. Summer staples like barbecues, festivals, and parties often involve eating. Suggest that your teens have a healthy snack before heading to these events so they're not starving when they get there. Then, they can take the focus off food by joining in the softball game or trying the crafts. Also, discuss healthy food choices such as corn on the cob instead of funnel cake or baked chicken drumsticks instead of hot dogs. ♡

ACTIVITY CORNER

Fitness freebies



Help your tween or teen make the most of her time outdoors—with activities that don't cost a thing. Here are a few she can try:

- Many local parks and beaches offer volleyball pits with nets. So playing a game requires nothing more than a group of friends and a ball. No nets? Your child can practice serving, spiking, and setting the ball with just a couple of people in a field.

- Dancing is a fun way to get exercise with friends. Have your teen set up a playlist of music and invite friends over for a backyard dance.



- Check out nearby recreation areas to see if they offer free events. Your teen might have the chance to study animals or learn to identify trees and plants on guided nature walks. ♡

In the Kitchen

On the grill

Cook dinner outside with these easy, healthy grill recipes.

Mushroom burger. Wash and stem portobello mushrooms. Brush with low-fat Italian salad dressing, and grill 5 minutes per side. Spread a bun with mashed avocado, and layer with a grilled mushroom, spinach, and tomato and red onion slices.

Ginger pork. Combine $\frac{1}{4}$ cup low-sodium soy sauce, 2 tbsp. honey, and $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. each sesame oil and garlic and ginger powders. Pour over 2 lb. pork

tenderloin, and marinate for 2 hours. Grill for about 15 minutes or until a meat thermometer reads 160°. Slice, and serve over brown rice.

Fish tacos. Sprinkle chili and cumin powder onto 4 tilapia fillets. Cook on an oiled grill, 3 minutes on each side. Place a fillet in a taco shell, and top with salsa and fat-free sour cream. ♡



Q&A

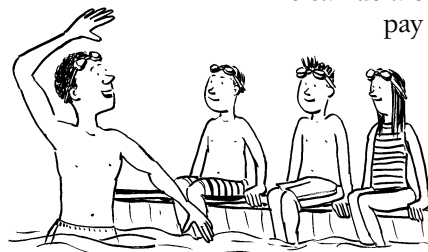
Active jobs

Q: My son is looking for work over the summer. I'm trying to encourage him to find a job that can give him some exercise, too. Any suggestions?

A: Many summer jobs offer teens a chance to stay active. For example, your child might find a position at a camp or recreation center where he can lead campers in outdoor games, swim with them, teach sports skills, or take them to the park.

You also could suggest that he look for ways to add some exercise into his work no matter what his job is. If he babysits, for instance, he can organize races or play games that give everyone—including him—a chance to exercise.

Finally, don't forget there may be jobs he can do around the house. You might pay him for work you were considering hiring someone else to do. Painting or washing windows can keep him active while getting the job done. ♡



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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