

Teen Food & Fitness

Healthy Ideas for Middle and High School Students

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W.A. Cunningham Intermediate School 234

Ms. Susan Schaeffer

FAST TAKES

Start off right

The new year is a great time to commit to a more active life. Encourage your teen to set goals—for example, increasing his daily exercise by 15 minutes.



Try to join in with a goal of your own. If everyone gets involved, you'll be more likely to stick to your resolutions.

Not so sweet

Artificial sweetener or sugar? If your child has diabetes or is overweight, diet drinks and artificially sweetened treats can help reduce his sugar intake. Otherwise, the best strategy is to keep foods that are naturally or artificially sweetened to a minimum.

Did You Know?

Our bodies need fat to survive. In fact, fat provides the greatest source of energy for everyday activities. The healthiest type of fat—unsaturated—comes from plants and fish. Good sources are avocados, nuts, and oils such as peanut, canola, olive, corn, safflower, and sesame.



Just for fun



Q: How do you know if a hippopotamus has been in your refrigerator?

A: You find footprints in the pudding!

Make time for breakfast

Would your teenager drive a car without gas? The next time he runs out to school without eating, tell him that skipping breakfast is like driving on an empty tank.

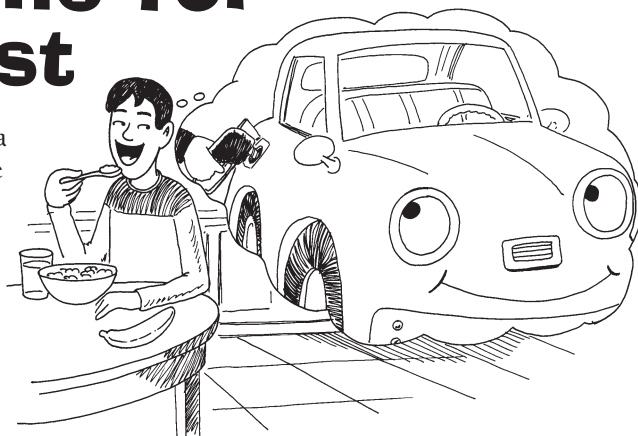
Look at it this way: If your child has dinner at 6 p.m. and doesn't eat again until noon, he will go 18 hours without food! Try these ways to handle your breakfast skipper's excuses.

"I don't have time."

Make it quick and easy. The night before, set out cereal boxes, bowls, spoons, and fresh fruit. Stock things your teen can take with him to school (cottage cheese cups, fruit muffins, granola bars). Or suggest breakfast in the cafeteria—then he won't have to get up any earlier.

"I don't like breakfast food."

Breakfast doesn't have to be ordinary. Instead of traditional morning foods, offer burritos, sandwiches (lean turkey



and low-fat cheese on a whole-grain roll), or last night's leftovers.

"I'm not hungry."

Have your high schooler drink his breakfast. Fruit smoothies (made with fat-free milk or yogurt) are a great alternative. Remember, eating or drinking even a little is better than nothing.

"I'm trying to lose weight."

Let your teen know that research shows that skipping breakfast backfires. Eating early will cut down on overeating later, especially if he has filling foods like oatmeal, wheat bran cereal, poached eggs, and bananas. ♥

In training

Spring sports season will be here before you know it. Suggest that your child start preparing now.

- Running every other day will work wonders for getting into shape. She can start with 20-minute runs and work up to 30 minutes. Suggest that she run outside or on a treadmill at the community center.
- Core conditioning is important, too. Ten minutes of push-ups and crunches (sit-ups with the knees bent) daily will strengthen your teen's arms, abdomen, and back.
- Doing any physical activity will improve overall fitness. Your child might join a volleyball or basketball league, or she could try a hip-hop or yoga class. ♥



Water, water everywhere

Active bodies need plenty of water—but what kind? Here are the clear facts.

Bottled

Bottled water is no safer or more natural than tap water. Plus, bottled water doesn't have fluoride, which is added to many water systems to prevent tooth decay. So in most cases, tap water is the better choice. *Tip:* For convenience on the go, fill sports bottles—or refill water bottles—with tap water.



Flavored

Some bottled waters have added sugar, fruit, or artificial flavorings to make them more appealing. These ingredients often add extra calories—in some cases, as many as in a can of soda! Check the nutrition label to find varieties that don't have calories.

Vitamin

Boosting your teen's vitamin intake through vitamin-enriched bottled water might seem like a good idea. Yet the vitamin content of these waters may be low and their calorie content high. Try to steer your child toward drinking regular water and getting the vitamins she needs through the food she eats. ♥

ACTIVITY CORNER

Winter workouts

Cold weather doesn't have to prevent your child from being active outdoors. There are plenty of ways to keep your teen moving. Share these ideas for fun with family or friends:



- ▲ Sled down hills—climbing back up is great exercise.
- ▲ Rent snowshoes from a ski shop, and explore the winter wonderland.

- ▲ Use your muscles to build a snowman or an igloo.
- ▲ Join an ice hockey league, or practice your slap shot with friends.
- ▲ Walk, jog, or go inline skating in the neighborhood (as long as the sidewalks are clear.)
- ▲ Lace up hiking boots, and head to a nearby trail.

Note: Be sure your child dresses for the weather. Suggest layers (T-shirt, long-sleeve shirt, fleece, jacket) rather than just a bulky overcoat. A hat and gloves are essential. ♥

PARENT TO PARENT

Healthy shopping

"There's nothing to eat!" That was our daughter Leah's complaint, even though we tried to buy healthy foods she would like. Instead, she'd bring in chips and fast food. We decided that the way to get Leah eating better was to involve her in shopping.

To begin, we asked her what snacks she wanted. Her first answer: pizza. At the grocery store, she picked out toppings like ham, pineapple, tomato sauce, and cheese. I showed her how to check the label to get lean ham, pineapples packed in juice, and skim mozzarella. We even found a frozen whole-grain crust.

The pizza was such a hit that Leah wanted to select the makings for her next choices: subs and fruit salad. Now she's the one scribbling ingredients on our grocery list, and together we read labels to find the healthiest options. ♥



In the Kitchen

Gone fishing

Fish has it all: it's a great source of protein, it's low in fat, and it's high in healthy omega-3 oils. Here are three ways to tempt your family to eat more fish.

Glaze and grill

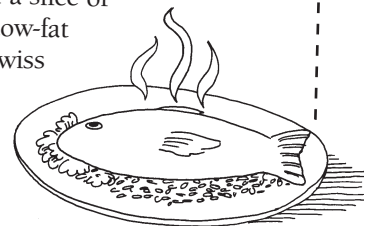
Prepare a glaze with 2 tbsp. olive oil, 1 tbsp. lemon juice, and 1 tsp. brown sugar. Brush on salmon or halibut before and during cooking.

In the shell

Season cod or snapper with a little chili powder. Grill or bake, and cut it into pieces. Put the fish chunks into taco shells with chopped bell peppers, canned corn, salsa, and a squirt of lime.

Sandwich melts

Lightly toast whole-grain bread and spread with mustard. Add drained canned tuna, salmon, or crabmeat, and top with a slice of tomato and low-fat cheddar or Swiss cheese. Broil until the cheese bubbles. ♥



OUR PURPOSE

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

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