

# Teen Food & Fitness

Healthy Ideas for Middle and High School Students

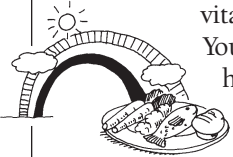
December 2007

## FAST TAKES

### Rainbow plate

Suggest that your child eat a rainbow of color, and she's more likely to get the nutrients she needs. Foods like orange carrots, dark green vegetables, white fish, and golden grains all provide different vitamins and minerals.

You might make it a habit to ask, "What colors did you eat today?"



### Activity gifts

Consider giving your youngster gifts that encourage exercise. The possibilities are endless: sports equipment (football, tennis racquet), family games (badminton or croquet set), or workout videos (dance, martial arts, aerobics). Activity-related gifts will get your teen moving more—and show that you value physical fitness.

### Did You Know?

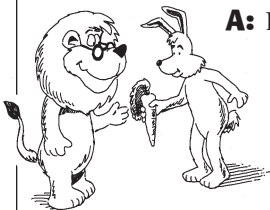
Being overweight, underweight, or out of shape can limit your teen's career opportunities. Fitness tests are required, for example, for astronaut, police officer, firefighter, or military applicants. Weight requirements vary for these fields but generally call for weight to be in proportion to height.



### Just for fun

**Q:** How do you know carrots are good for your eyes?

**A:** Because you never see a rabbit wearing glasses.



## Fast and healthy

Fast food is a way of life for many young people. You can help make it a healthier way of life for your teen by passing on these tips:

- Choose grilled chicken or baked fish over fried versions.
- Try different side dishes, such as yogurt-granola parfaits and hearty broth-based soups (vegetable, bean).
- Instead of sour cream and extra cheese on burritos or tacos, top with good-for-you salsa. *Idea:* Consider getting your burrito as a salad bowl.
- When selecting sandwich bread, make it whole grain. Pitas or tortillas (whole wheat, spinach, tomato) are good choices, too. *Note:* Stay away from buttery croissants.
- Say "no, thanks" to bacon, mayonnaise, or high-fat sauces on sandwiches and subs. Boost the flavor instead with mustard, lettuce, tomatoes, onions, and other vegetables.
- For side dishes, replace fries, onion rings, and chips with fresh fruit or a



salad with low-fat dressing. Top baked potatoes with chili rather than butter. Leave gravy off mashed potatoes.

- Share a super-size meal with a friend. Splitting an order saves on calories, fat, sodium—and money.
- Skip the soda, and have water or fat-free milk instead.
- For dessert, opt for fruit or low-fat frozen yogurt.

*Note:* Try to model these ideas when eating fast food with your child. She'll learn that healthy eating habits are important to you, too. ♥

## Individual sports

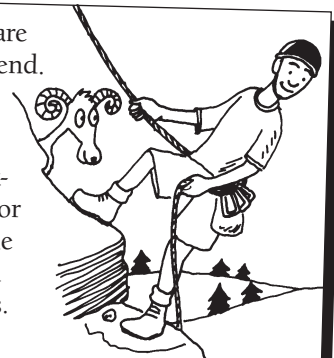
If your child is not interested in team sports, there are still plenty of ways to get exercise—alone or with a friend. Here are some suggestions.

### Make a splash

Swimming laps provides a great cardiovascular workout and tones the body. Help your youngster find indoor and outdoor pools (community center, YMCA) where he can swim year-round. For extra fun, look for pools with volleyball or basketball nets, or even water polo leagues.

### Glide and climb

Some kids like "extreme" sports. Skateboarding, stunt biking, and rock climbing all develop strength and flexibility. Be sure your child wears appropriate safety gear (helmet, knee and wrist pads, climbing harness) and receives proper training. ♥



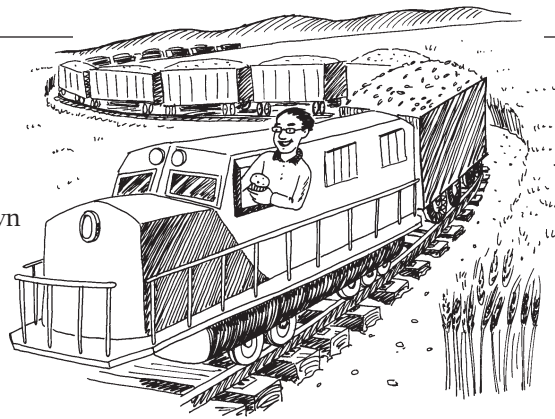
# Switching to whole grains

What's better than rice and wheat? Brown rice and whole wheat!

You can get your teen used to the taste of whole grains by stocking them at home and ordering them when you eat out together. Try these ideas.

## Explain

Discuss why whole grains are better. You can tell your child that whole grains (wheat, rice, oats) contain more fiber, vitamins, and minerals than refined grains because they include the entire kernel of the grain. Fiber is good for digestion and also helps prevent heart disease and some cancers.



## Shop

At the grocery store, try to choose whole-grain breads, cereals, pastas, and snack foods. These items will often say "100% whole grain" on the front. Check the nutrition label for at least 2 grams of fiber.

## Cook

If your teen is used to white bread and processed grains, you might need to introduce whole grains gradually. For example, replace some of the white flour in pancakes and muffins with whole-wheat flour. Or mix regular and whole-wheat pasta, or white and brown rice, slowly increasing the whole-grain portion. ●

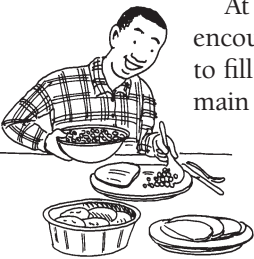
## Q & A Holiday eating

**Q:** Over winter break, our children tend to overeat at all the parties and holiday dinners.

What can I do?

**A:** The best strategy is to help them eat three balanced meals a day and cut down on treats. Before parties, suggest that your kids drink a glass of milk or water. Then they won't be starving and head straight for the junk food.

At holiday dinners, encourage your children to fill up on healthy main courses and vegetables and to take smaller portions of stuffing, candied sweet



potatoes, and pie. To satisfy hunger pangs between meals, keep a supply of healthy snacks on hand, such as rice cakes and peanut butter, hard-boiled eggs, and fresh fruit.

Finally, remember that it's okay to indulge a little. Suggest that your children choose one sweet—*after* they eat a nutritious meal. ●

## ACTIVITY CORNER

### Stretch time

Help your teen prevent injuries by having her warm up before playing sports and cool down afterward. Here are some guidelines.

**Warm-up** should last about 5–10 minutes. Encourage your youngster to stretch the muscles she will work out, holding each pose for 10–30 seconds on each side of the body. She can also do a slower version of the activity she plans, such as hitting balls gently before a tennis match or playing catch prior to a softball game.

**Cooldown** should be another 5–10 minutes of light aerobics and stretching. The goal is to return the heart rate and breathing to normal and relax the muscles. At the end of an ice-skating session, for example, your teen could glide slowly around the rink. Then, have her gently stretch all the muscles she used.

*Note:* If your youngster gets too tired or uncomfortable or breaks more than a light sweat, she should do less-strenuous stretches. ●



## In the Kitchen

### Main-dish salads

Who says salad has to be a side dish? Tempt your teen with these hearty and delicious main-dish salads. *Note:* Serve the dressings on the side. That way, everyone can take only what they need, and leftover salad will stay fresh longer.

**Spinach:** Fresh spinach, sliced pears, diced red onion, and baked salmon or chicken. Serve with a dressing of ¼ cup vinegar, ¼ cup olive oil, 1 tsp. Dijon mustard, a dash of Worcestershire sauce, and ground pepper.

**Asian:** Cooked Chinese noodles, mandarin oranges, shredded carrots and lettuce, and cooked shrimp

or beef. Make a dressing of ¼ cup canola oil, ¼ cup rice vinegar, 1 tsp. low-sodium soy sauce, and a dash of sugar.

**Grains:** Cooked lentils and brown rice, chopped apples, raisins, and peanuts. For the dressing, season equal parts of nonfat plain or flavored yogurt (vanilla, lemon, apple) and light mayonnaise with curry powder. ●



## OUR PURPOSE

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

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