

Teen Food & Fitness

Healthy Ideas for Middle and High School Students

February 2018

Gwinnett School Nutrition Program
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FAST TAKES

The scoop on dried fruit

Raisins, dried apricots, and banana chips have many of the same nutrients as fresh fruit, especially fiber. However, they're high in natural sugar, so your tween should choose packages with no added sugar and stick to the recommended serving size. In addition to eating a small handful, he might sprinkle dried fruit on a salad or stir into yogurt or oatmeal.



Breathe easy

When your teen works out, it's important for her to breathe correctly. Holding her breath during strength training (using free weights or her body weight) can cause dizziness and nausea. To be sure she gets plenty of oxygen, encourage her to *exhale* while lifting a weight and *inhale* as she lowers it.

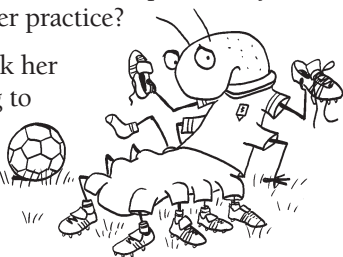
Did You Know?

It's likely that two children in every classroom have a food allergy. Even if your tween is not one of them, he can help others by not sharing food in school and by following guidelines about what team snacks he may bring. *Note:* The most common allergies are to milk, eggs, peanuts, tree nuts, wheat, soy, and shellfish.

Just for fun

Q: Why was the centipede always late for soccer practice?

A: It took her too long to tie her shoes.



Handling picky eaters

If you have a picky eater at home, you're not alone! Use these strategies to help your tween or teen become a more adventurous—and healthier—eater.

Ease into it

A plate piled high with greens may overwhelm your veggie-avoiding tween. Offer small portions of new foods to encourage her to try them with no pressure. For instance, set up a family salad bar, and encourage everyone to take small amounts of different vegetables.

Limit snacks

If cookies, chips, and candy are in the house, your teen may fill up on them before or after meals rather than eat what you cook. Consider limiting unhealthy snacks so she'll be more open to sampling what's served at mealtimes.

Try, try again

Your child might not like broiled fish the first time she tastes it. Or the fifth!



In fact, it can take as many as 15 tries to get your tween to accept a new food. Keep exposing her to new things. Perhaps serve it in a different way—put fish into tacos and top with fruit salsa, or add it to a rice bowl.

Be a good role model

Let your tween see you enjoying the healthy foods you want her to eat. Studies show that kids are more likely to eat what their parents or caregivers have. She might have spinach or lentils if you do! ♥

How to choose a team sport

Team sports can teach your tween the value of healthy competition and the power of working together. Share these ways to help him find one that's right for him:

- Start with a game he enjoys—he'll be more likely to stick with it. Baseball may be a good fit if he's always playing catch in the backyard or watching baseball games on TV.
- Choose a sport that matches his talents. If it's easy for him to jump high or run fast, he might consider track and field or basketball. Or if he's like a fish in water, maybe he'll join the swim team. ♥



Learn while you earn

With a food-related job, your teen could bring home more than just a paycheck. It can also be a great way to build food knowledge and even be active on the job. Have him consider these positions.

Grocery stock clerk. Your child will learn the names of the foods he shelves. He may stock produce like starfruit and kohlrabi or sort cheese like gruyere and gorgonzola in the dairy aisle. At home,



he could look up recipes to try that include interesting or unusual foods he discovers.

Cashier. Encourage your teenager to pay attention to how much different foods cost, what coupons customers use, and what is on sale each week. He could help you make a grocery list based on coupons and sales—this will teach him to be a smart shopper.

Food server. Your teen will get lots of ideas about how food can be prepared

and presented, and he may even get to sample new menu items. For instance, the cook might brush pork chops with a maple-mustard glaze or use tomato and cucumber salad as a garnish. Ask him to make a meal at home that's inspired by one from his restaurant. ●

ACTIVITY CORNER



Scarf workouts

A scarf isn't just for keeping your neck warm in winter—your tween can use it to exercise, too! Suggest these routines for her to try.

● **Do figure eights.** With legs shoulder-width apart, squat, and move a scarf in a figure-eight pattern. Start with it in your right hand, move it between your legs and behind your left knee, and grab it with your left hand. Now pass it behind your right knee, and take it with your right hand. Repeat 5 times, then reverse directions.

● **Toss and touch.** Build coordination and speed as you race against yourself.

Throw a lightweight scarf in the air, and see how many times you can clap your hands before it falls back down. Catch it, and try again. Other motions to try while the scarf falls: Spin in a circle, touch your toes, or even turn a cartwheel! ●



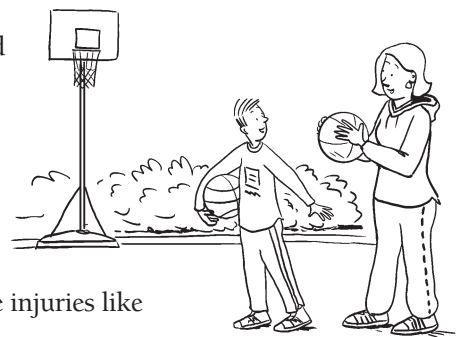
PARENT TO PARENT

Don't overdo it!

I was happy when my son Mason started exercising. But when he began running and lifting weights twice a day, I worried that he was becoming obsessed with it.

Together, we looked up exercise recommendations for 13-year-old boys and found out that he needs about an hour of physical activity a day. We also read that too much exercise can cause overuse injuries like muscle tears or even stress fractures.

Mason didn't like the idea of getting hurt and not being able to work out. Now he has eased up and is exercising once a day most of the time. He's satisfied because he feels himself getting stronger, and I feel better, too. ●



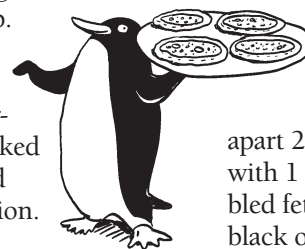
In the Kitchen

Think outside the pizza box

Why stick with pepperoni and mozzarella when there are so many tasty and nutritious pizza toppings out there? Try these twists.

Barbecue chicken

Preheat oven to 375°. Place 4 sandwich thins on a baking sheet, and brush each with $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. low-sodium barbecue sauce. Top with 2 tbsp. shredded pepper-jack cheese, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup cooked shredded chicken, and 1 tsp. chopped red onion. Bake 10 minutes.



Bell pepper and cheese

Preheat oven to 450°. Press whole-grain store-bought pizza dough into a round nonstick baking sheet. Drizzle with 1 tbsp. olive oil. Sprinkle with $\frac{1}{8}$ tsp. garlic powder, and add 1 sliced green bell pepper, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup shredded cheddar cheese, and $\frac{1}{8}$ tsp. black pepper. Bake 12–15 minutes.

Mediterranean pita

Preheat oven to 450°. Split apart 2 whole-grain pitas. Top each half with 1 tbsp. pizza sauce, 2 tbsp. crumbled feta cheese, and 1 tbsp. halved black olives. Bake 12–15 minutes. ●

OUR PURPOSE

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

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a division of CCH Incorporated
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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