

# Teen Food & Fitness

Healthy Ideas for Middle and High School Students

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Gwinnett School Nutrition Program  
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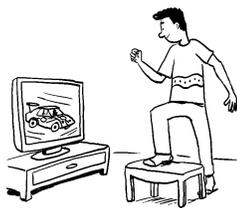
## FAST TAKES

### Entertaining exercise

Working out while watching your favorite TV show can make exercise go faster. Your teenager might try bicep curls with dumbbells or step up and down on a sturdy bench.

*Idea:* Before-

hand, have him write out which exercises he'll do so he can refer to his list as he watches.



### Good fats

Using dressing made with healthy oils not only makes salad taste great, it also helps your tween get more nutrients. Healthy fats found in oils like olive, sesame, corn, and soybean let her absorb beta-carotene and other antioxidants from vegetables. *Idea:* For even more "good" fat, she could toss avocado chunks into her salad.

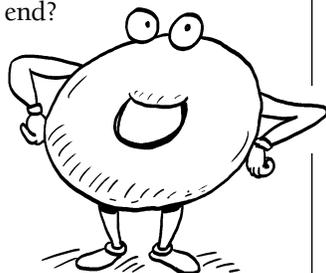
### Did You Know?

Aerobic activity is good for the body and the mind. Vigorous exercise, such as walking, boxing, or hip-hop dancing, causes the body to produce endorphins—hormones that bring about a feeling of well-being and relaxation. It's just another great reason for your child to work out.

### Just for fun

**Q:** What has no beginning, no middle, and no end?

**A:** A bagel.



## Let's eat together

A family meal brings a lot to the table, from better nutrition to strong family bonds. Consider these tips for making the most of the experience.

### Introduce healthy foods

Kids who share family meals are more likely to try new foods and eat more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. Ask your youngster to choose different ingredients and find ways to incorporate them into nutritious meals. For instance, she might want to grill sliced pineapple alongside pork chops. Or she may find a recipe for lasagna with eggplant and whole-wheat noodles in place of meat and regular noodles.

### Give everyone a role

Split up tasks so everyone is involved in getting dinner on the table. You might write the grocery list, and your teenager can do the shopping. Then if you cook, your tween could clear the table and load the dishwasher. Or vice versa. She'll



get more comfortable in the kitchen, and the burden won't fall on one person.

### Enjoy conversation

Family meals give your child a chance to talk about her day and connect with you. And close parent-child relationships help steer kids away from cigarettes, alcohol, and drugs. Tell each other about your experiences. Try conversation starters like: "What was the funniest thing that happened this week?" or "If you could change one thing about today, what would it be?"

## Got braces? No worries!

If your youngster wears braces, a few simple changes will let him enjoy foods and not risk breaking a wire or bracket.

**Cut up fruit.** Have him slice crunchy fruits like apples instead of biting into them whole. *Tip:* He can safely eat applesauce or soft fruit like bananas (break pieces off to eat).

**Cook vegetables.** Rather than eat raw broccoli, your child could microwave it



until soft. Mashed potatoes and steamed spinach are good bets, too.

**Swap out snacks.** Whole-grain pita bread triangles are a soft alternative to chips. Your tween might top them with spreadable cheese.

**Watch for bones.** For chicken wings or ribs, pull meat off the bone before eating it.

*Note:* Your child should avoid crusty breads, pretzels, caramels, jelly beans, and gum. His orthodontist will have a list of foods he can and cannot eat.

# Prep ahead for busy weeks

Taking just one hour over the weekend to prepare ahead can set you up for a week of healthy food shortcuts. These suggestions will help:

- Chop onions and peppers, and refrigerate in containers or zip-top bags. Later, you could add them to eggs for breakfast or fajitas for dinner.
- Get lettuce or kale ready to use for salads, wraps, and soups. Wash and completely dry your greens before storing them—use a salad spinner or wrap tightly in a clean kitchen towel. Line a plastic container with paper



towels, put dry greens in, top with another paper towel, and seal.

- Boil family-sized servings of brown rice or whole-grain pasta. Store separately. Add a drizzle of olive oil to pasta to prevent stickiness. Reheat in the microwave.
- Prepare proteins ahead of time. Bake chicken breasts to use in sandwiches or stir-fries. Brown ground turkey for spaghetti or tacos. Cube and cook tofu for salads or rice bowls. ●

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## Q & A Grades and sports

**Q:** On my son's last report card, a couple of his grades had dropped. Should I still let him play a sport this season?

**A:** Although it's great for your son to play sports, you want him to realize that school comes first—and being on a team depends on getting decent grades.

Together, talk to his teachers, counselor, or coach, and develop plans to help him pull up his grades. For example, there may be special study hall times or tutoring available. You could also encourage him to look for ways to mix schoolwork and sports, such as studying with teammates or doing homework while riding the bus to away games.

Be sure he understands that you expect him to do his best in school as well as on the field. Find out what his school's guidelines are on the subject, such as “no pass, no play.” Then, agree on acceptable grades for each subject. ●



## ACTIVITY CORNER

### Warm up, cool down

Warming up and cooling down are important parts of exercising that help prevent injuries. Here's how.

#### Warm-ups

Suggest that she do a slower version of the exercise she's about to start. For instance, before a run, walking or jogging slowly for 5–10 minutes will get her heart ready for more strenuous exercise and loosen up her muscles. *Tip:* Your child might need extra warm-up time if she's exercising outdoors in cold weather.



#### Cool-downs

A good cool-down helps her heart return to its normal rate and reduces her chances of leg cramps and stiffness. If she's riding a stationary bike, she could gradually slow the speed and resistance. Then, have her stretch—while her muscles and joints are still warm—with lunges or side bends, for example. ●

## In the Kitchen

### Burgers with no beef

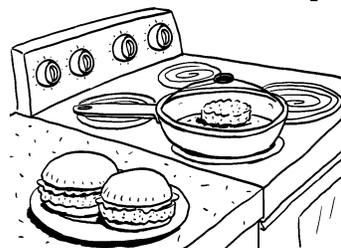
Burgers don't have to be made with beef to be tasty. Try these twists. (Each recipe makes 4–6 patties.)

**Chicken.** Mix 1 lb. ground chicken with 1 tsp. each onion and garlic powder. Add salt and pepper to taste. Grill about 5 minutes per side or until cooked through.

**Quinoa.** Make  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup quinoa according to package directions. Combine with 2 tbsp. tomato paste, 2 eggs (beaten),  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup whole-wheat bread crumbs,

and  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup grated Parmesan cheese. Divide into patties. Cook in a skillet with cooking spray until both sides are golden-brown.

**Tuna.** Combine 12 oz. canned tuna (drained), 1 beaten egg,  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup panko crumbs,  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp. each dried oregano and dried basil,  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup diced tomatoes (canned or fresh),  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup chopped red onion, and salt and pepper. Make patties. Bake at 375° for 10 minutes, flip, and bake another 10 minutes. ●



### 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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