

# Teen FOOD & FITNESS

Healthy Ideas for Middle and High School Students

December 2009



## FAST TAKES

### Fit role models

Your child can discover new ways to work out by talking to people he admires. For example, maybe his gym teacher plays roller hockey or his track coach lifts weights. Or he can read biographies of famous athletes to learn how they stay in shape off the field.

### Hot drinks



If your teen drinks coffee, consider coaxing her toward healthier options. Warm apple cider is full of vitamin C, and it's extra delicious with a thin slice of orange floating on top. Or suggest that she try calcium-rich "hot vanilla"—microwave a cup of fat-free milk, and add 1 teaspoon of honey and ½ teaspoon of vanilla extract.

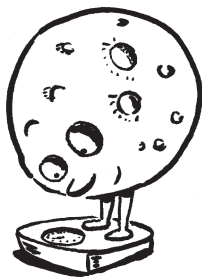
### Did You Know?

Oils make up the smallest slice of the food pyramid. Children should have fewer than 2 tablespoons each day of foods such as oil-based dressings, butter, margarine, and mayonnaise. Suggest healthy alternatives like salsa for salads and baked potatoes, honey mustard for sandwiches, and apple butter on toast.

### Just for fun

**Q:** When does the moon weigh the most?

**A:** When it's full!



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## Healthy shopping

Good nutrition begins at the grocery store. Take your child along when you shop, and talk about how to choose healthy foods. You'll help her eat well now and be a smart shopper when she grows up.

### Fruits and vegetables.

Show your youngster how to select fruits and vegetables.

For example, she should choose apples that are firm and bananas that don't have bruises.

If you need an item that isn't in season (blueberries or corn in the winter), explain that frozen fruits and vegetables are a good option, too. Canned is the last choice, since nutrients may be lost when foods are processed, and sugar or salt may be added.

**Grains and cereals.** Teach your child to spot whole-grain products when you're choosing bread, cereal, tortillas, crackers, rice, and pasta. The package will often be labeled "100% whole grain," and the first ingredient will be whole wheat or another whole grain. *Idea:* Find a package that says "wheat" (not "whole wheat") on the front, and have your youngster check



the ingredient list. The main ingredient is likely to be enriched flour or unbleached enriched flour—which is white flour—rather than whole wheat.

**Meats and poultry.** Explain how to select the leanest meat by finding the label with the lowest percentage of fat. For example, look for ground beef labeled "lean" or "extra lean." Buy skinless chicken, or remove the skin at home. Your teen should also check the date to make sure they are fresh. While ready-to-cook meats and poultry are convenient, you might steer her away from them because they often contain breading and marinades with sodium and preservatives. You can add your own flavorings at home. ♡

### Snow games

When winter brings snow, encourage your youngsters to make the most of it! Playing in the snow is a fun workout—suggest that they challenge their friends to games like these:

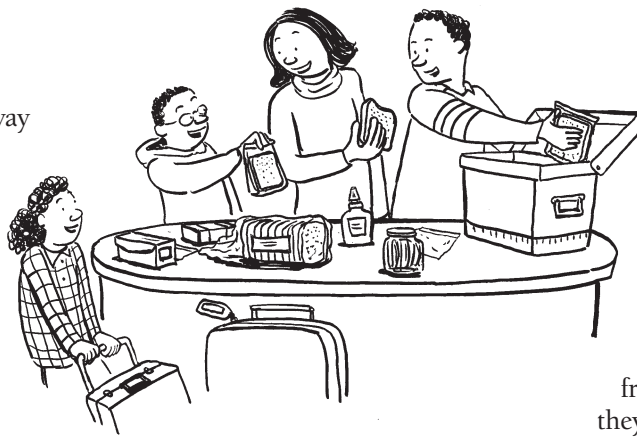
- Race to be first to sled down a hill and run back up.
- Hold batting practice with snowballs, and watch them fly apart on contact. Each batter gets 10 pitches. The winner is the one with the most hits.
- Play snow basketball. See who can throw snowballs into a recycling bin from the farthest distance.
- Compete to build the biggest snowman or the tallest snow fort. ♡



# On the road

Are you visiting relatives or going away over winter break? Get everyone involved in planning healthy meals and snacks, and you'll find it's easy to eat nutritiously wherever you are.

**Pack healthy foods.** Set out sandwich supplies, raw vegetables, and fresh fruit, and let your children make their own lunches. Take along water in bottles that you can refill on the road. And don't forget snacks. You might choose plain popcorn, grapes, or low-fat string cheese. When your children get hungry in the car,



they can have these healthy snacks instead of getting chips and soda at a rest stop or convenience store.

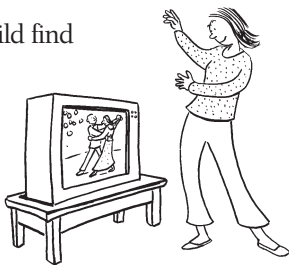
**Choose restaurant food carefully.** If you stop for a meal in a restaurant, consider splitting an entrée and ordering an extra side of vegetables. Stay away from all-you-can-eat buffets—they encourage overeating and are usually filled with fried foods and other high-fat items. In airports and train stations, order a sub with lean meats and fresh vegetables to take on the plane or train. Or find a counter that sells fresh fruit or yogurt parfaits. ♥

## ACTIVITY CORNER

### Dance!

Dancing is a whole-body workout *and* a fun social activity. Share these three ideas that can improve your teen's coordination, flexibility, strength, and endurance:

1. Help your child find a dance class at a community center. Many places now offer Zumba, an aerobics dance class taught to Latin music. Or she could try hip-hop, modern dance, or ballet. Her school might even have dance classes as a PE option.



2. Suggest that your youngster try out for a talent show or musical at school or at a community theater. Whether she's in the chorus line or has a solo act, the practices will be good exercise.

3. Borrow dance videos from the library, or have your teen learn dance steps at Web sites like [www.ballroomdancers.com/Dances](http://www.ballroomdancers.com/Dances) or [www.learntodance.com](http://www.learntodance.com). Encourage her to practice with a friend and use the moves they learn to make up their own routines. ♥

## OUR PURPOSE

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

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## PARENT TO PARENT

### Picky eaters

Cooking for my family isn't always easy. My kids don't like trying new foods, and they won't eat vegetables.

One night I decided to try a trick I saw on a cooking show. I mixed chopped spinach with ground turkey. My son was shocked to discover that he liked spinach burgers! So I've started adding new foods to other dishes they like. For instance, I've put shredded carrots in chili and mixed brown rice in with white rice.

Also, I've found that they're more likely to try something if it's served with dip. Sometimes I make sweet potato "fries" by cutting sweet potatoes into strips and baking them. My children eat them with fat-free ranch dressing. And they love to dip fresh broccoli or cherry tomatoes in melted cheese. My meals aren't always a hit, but I think my kids are getting the idea that trying new foods can be fun. ♥



## In the Kitchen

### Food gifts

Tasty treats make perfect holiday gifts for everyone on your child's list. Here are healthy recipes she might try.

#### Cranberry orange sauce

Stir 3 cups fresh or frozen cranberries, ¾ cup orange juice, and ½ cup sugar in a saucepan. Bring to a boil, reduce heat, and simmer uncovered over low heat for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Let cool, and pour into jars to chill overnight.



#### Gingerbread pancakes

In a jar, layer ⅛ cup sugar, 2 cups whole-wheat flour, ½ cup low-fat powdered milk, 1 tbsp. baking powder, ½ tsp. ground ginger, and ¼ tsp. cinnamon. Attach a recipe card: "Add ½ cup water, 1 tbsp. applesauce, and 1 egg, and stir. Cook pancakes, and serve with applesauce."

#### Pumpkin trail mix

Stir together 2 cups roasted pumpkin seeds, 2 cups peanuts, 1 cup coconut flakes, 1 cup raisins, and 1 cup dried cherries. Divide into plastic bags. ♥