

# Teen Food & Fitness

Healthy Ideas for Middle and High School Students

RIVER ROAD ISD

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## FAST TAKES

### Pin healthy recipes

Encourage your teen to keep track of healthy recipes on a digital bulletin board like Pinterest. She can search for healthy foods by ingredient name, such as kale or fish, look through pictures, and pin the items she likes on her board. She might also follow other Pinterest users with similar interests to find creative takes on nutritious meals.

### Did You Know?

Frozen vegetables contain as many nutrients as fresh ones. In fact, they may even have more. Vegetables are frozen at their peak ripeness, which also happens to be when they're richest in nutrients. Keep a variety of frozen vegetables on hand so you'll have them available to serve with meals or to add to soups or casseroles.



### Prevent shin splints

Shin splints are common among youngsters who run or do other sports. To prevent them, encourage your child to vary his activity so he uses other muscles. Wearing sneakers with added support may also ease discomfort. *Note:* Make sure to check with your child's doctor if the pain is severe.

### Just for fun

**Q:** Why did the jelly wobble?

**A:** It saw the milk shake.



## Healthy holiday routines

Around the holidays, celebrations often center on food. Make sure your festivities include healthy eating and plenty of activity with these ideas.

### Keep it simple

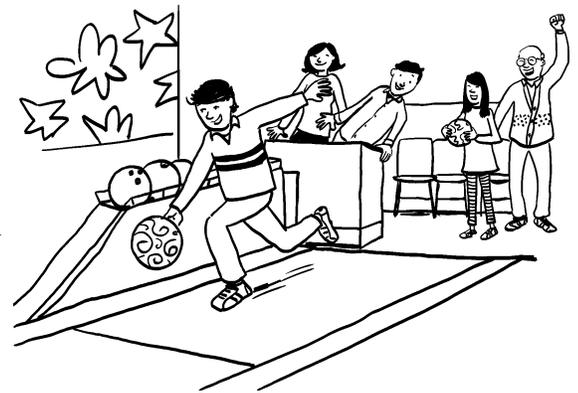
Prepare a handful of dishes and sides instead of a whole buffet. With fewer recipes to make, you can concentrate on ways to make them healthier, like limiting cheese in casseroles, trying out new vegetable dishes, and using whole grains. *Tip:* See the recipes on page 2 for lighter side dishes.

### Skip seconds

Talk to your teen about paying attention to when he feels satisfied and to avoid going back for seconds. He might drink a glass of water before eating so he'll already start to feel full and be less likely to overeat. Once he finishes eating, suggest he move around and talk to other people instead of getting more food.

### Go easy on desserts

Enjoying a sweet after a holiday meal is fine. But having a high-calorie dessert



after every meal can lead to habits that last well after the holidays—and will pack on the pounds. Instead, finish meals with fresh fruit like pears, pineapple chunks, kiwi slices, or clementines (seedless tangerines).

### Build in exercise

Encourage your family to spend time together away from the dinner table by being active. Brainstorm ideas for holiday breaks, or anytime, such as going bowling, playing charades, or organizing an impromptu dance contest. Come up with a list to post on the refrigerator for future family fun. ●

## Read, study, and play!

Combining outdoor activity with reading and studying is a great way for your teen to kill two birds with one stone. Here are suggestions.

**"Read" and run.** She can take a book along with her on a jog through your neighborhood. Public libraries offer audio books to check out or to download for listening on a smartphone.

**Do homework at a park.** Have your child pack up her books and do assignments at a picnic table. When she needs a break, it's easy to take a quick walk around the park.

**Study and dribble.** Encourage her to add activity to studying. For example, she could write facts or test questions in chalk on a sidewalk or driveway. Then, she can dribble over each one while she memorizes the fact or answers the question. ●



# Finding out the Facts Up Front

Many food products now list the most important nutrition information right on the front of the package in easy-to-read icons. Here's how your tween or teen can use the Facts Up Front labels to her advantage:

- Check out the calories per serving. Does it seem like a lot of calories for a serving size? How many servings are in the package? Your child may find that the bag of chips she usually eats all at once is really four servings!
- Watch the sugar, saturated fat, and sodium. More sugar means more calories, so encourage her to look for lower



numbers there. For saturated fat and sodium, she'll see both the amounts per serving and the percentage based on a daily value (DV). It's probably easier to focus on the amount—the lower the number the better.

- Other icons call out good nutrients. Your child should look for the amount and percentages of vitamins and minerals, such as potassium or vitamin A. In general, foods with higher amounts are more nutritious.

*Note:* Let your youngster know that not all food labels contain every icon, so it's a good idea to read the Nutrition Facts label, too. You can both learn more at [factsupfront.org](http://factsupfront.org).

## Q & A A "nutritious" science fair project

**Q:** My 12-year-old, Andy, wants to do his science fair project about food. How could he involve nutrition?

**A:** There are many science fair projects that can teach your tween more about nutrition.



Finding the right one depends on his interests—or maybe on his favorite foods!

For instance, he might explore the amount of vitamin C in fruits or weigh the iron in breakfast cereals. To measure the iron, he would crush  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of various cereals in separate baggies, add 1 cup water to each, and stir with a strong magnet. By weighing the iron that clings to the magnet, he will determine which cereal is richest in the mineral.

Encourage your son to look for ideas in library books or online and list his favorites. Then, he can discuss them with his science teacher to come up with his topic.

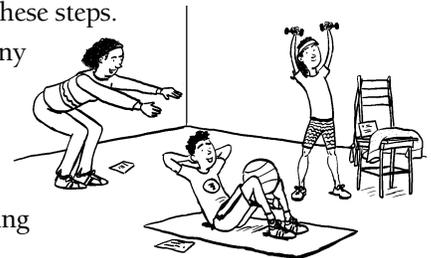


## ACTIVITY CORNER

### Family fitness circuit

Circuit training is perfect for a family—you can work out together, with each person moving from one exercise station to the next to complete the "circuit." Follow these steps.

- 1. Gather equipment.** Include weights or any other exercise gear you have, along with towels, beach balls, and jump ropes.
- 2. Make flashcards.** Brainstorm a list of exercises. Ask your teen to write each one on a card. *Example:* "Do sit-ups while holding a ball between your knees."
- 3. Set up stations.** Put each card next to the gear needed. Spread the stations around a room or several rooms of your home.
- 4. Begin!** Decide how long to spend at each station, maybe 1–3 minutes, and set a timer. *Idea:* Make several cards for each station. On the first time around the circuit, do the exercise on the top card. The next time, the next one, and so on.



## In the Kitchen

### Better-for-you sides

Keep your family's Thanksgiving meal a little lighter with these side dishes.

#### Mashed sweet potatoes

Cut 6 sweet potatoes into cubes, and boil until tender, about 25 minutes. Mash the potatoes with 3 tbsp. pineapple juice and 1 tbsp. butter. Pour into a baking dish, and top with  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup mini marshmallows. Bake at 350° for 15 minutes.

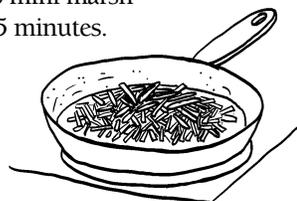
#### Almond green beans

Microwave a 10-oz. bag of frozen green beans. In a skillet, toast  $\frac{1}{3}$  cup slivered almonds in

1 tsp. olive oil, then add the cooked green beans. Sprinkle with  $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp. garlic powder and  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup crumbled feta cheese. Serve hot or at room temperature.

#### Orange-cranberry sauce

Bring a 12-oz. bag cranberries,  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup orange juice,  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup applesauce, and  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup water to a boil in a saucepan. Reduce heat, and simmer for 10 minutes. Add 2 tbsp. honey and the zest and juice from 1 orange. Cool, and refrigerate.



### 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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