

# Teen Food & Fitness

Healthy Ideas for Middle and High School Students

October 2011



## FAST TAKES

### Meatless meals



Going without meat once a week can be an easy way to lighten up your family dinners. Try serving a weekly meal that stars vegeta-

bles, beans, tofu, or eggs. To find recipes, search for “vegetarian entrées” at websites such as [www.meatlessmonday.com](http://www.meatlessmonday.com). *Note:* Be sure to stay away from high-fat choices like fried vegetables or sauce-laden pasta.

### Dance to the beat

If your teen enjoys dance shows on TV, suggest that she try dance classes or dancing to videos at home. She'll have fun—and get lots of exercise. In fact, ballroom dancing can burn as many calories as using a treadmill. She can look for classes at the YMCA, search online for step-by-step instructions, or borrow videos from the library.

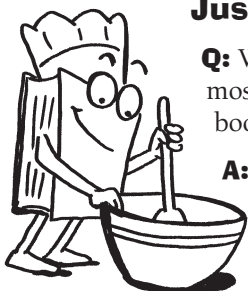
### Did You Know?

Protein bars (often called energy bars or sports bars) may be convenient and sound nutritious, but they can have as many calories and as much fat as candy bars. Look for whole-grain bars with no saturated or trans fats. They should also be high in fiber and protein (3 grams or more of each) and low in sugar (no more than 10 grams).

### Just for fun

**Q:** What are the most delicious books?

**A:** Cookbooks!



Jackson Parish School Board  
Nancy K. Laffitte, CNP Supervisor

## Smarter snacking

Chips or a pear? Fries or a turkey sandwich? Choosing nutritious snacks can help your child feel well and stay energized. Suggest these ideas.

### Have snacks ready

Encourage your tween or teen to think about the snacks she'll have throughout the day. She could pack something to eat between the end of school and the start of lacrosse practice, for example. Or she can set out a healthy snack (a banana and chunky peanut butter, for example) before she goes for a run or to play rehearsal. Then, she won't be as tempted to look for potato chips or ice cream when she gets home.

### Figure out hunger

After school your youngster will probably be ready for a good-sized snack. But at other times, she may eat because she's bored or sleepy. Have her try the



“15-minute rule.” She should hold off snacking and think of something else to do (go out with a friend, take a nap). In 15 minutes, she can see whether her problem is solved—or if she's really hungry.

### Avoid processed foods

Explain that cheese puffs, hot dogs, and other overly processed foods pack additional calories and often contain artificial ingredients and extra sodium. They may also lack many important nutrients. Natural foods (fresh fruits and vegetables, nuts) make a better choice. ●

## Prevent injury

By following a few simple guidelines, your young athlete has a better chance of avoiding injuries:

- Use the right equipment. Helmets, pads, and supportive shoes all go a long way toward keeping your child safe. *Tip:* Ask the coach, the team trainer, or a knowledgeable store clerk to check to be sure the equipment fits properly.
- Cross-train to become a well-rounded athlete. Varying exercises—say, mixing in a yoga session on days off from basketball practice—can build strength and flexibility in muscles that aren't normally used.

*Note:* Watch out for pain. If your youngster is limping or has numbness, swelling, or loss of flexibility, he should see a doctor. ●



# "I can cook!"

Your teen is more apt to eat a meal that he helps prepare. Show him how to cook with these easy, healthy techniques.

**Sauté.** For this quick-cooking method, chop or slice vegetables, and cut meats into cubes or strips. Heat a little olive oil in a skillet, add ingredients, and stir occasionally with a wooden spoon until the vegetables are tender and the meats are cooked through. *Note:* You can do the same thing in a wok: stir constantly, and you're stir-frying.



**Steam.** Heat fresh or frozen vegetables in a covered microwave-safe bowl along with 1–2 tbsp. of water. Cook 4–6 minutes, stirring occasionally. Test for doneness by piercing with a fork.

**Broil.** This technique relies on high heat to cook meat, fish, chicken, and vegetables. Set the oven on broil, and move the rack to the top position. *Note:* Keep a close eye on the food so it doesn't burn.

**Poach.** The cooking heat comes from the liquid. For example, put chicken pieces in a pot of water or chicken broth. Bring to a boil. Then, reduce heat to a low simmer, and cook until the color of the chicken changes from pink to white. *Tip:* This is a great way to make juicy, low-fat chicken to use in chicken salad or burritos. ♥

## PARENT TO PARENT Peer influence

As my daughter Maggie got older, she tended to follow her friends' lead in eating. When she was with friends who ate junk food, she ate junk food. When she was with friends who ate healthier, she did, too. I wasn't quite sure what to do. After all, I couldn't suggest that she only hang out with people who eat fruits and vegetables.

I spoke to a neighbor who is a dietitian, and she gave me some ideas. First, I reminded Maggie that she's in charge of making her own nutritious choices.



I mentioned ways to avoid unhealthy foods, and we even role-played things she could say, such as "I'm not in the mood for candy—I'd rather have an apple."

Then, I suggested that she invite friends over more often for meals or snacks. That way, it would be easier for her to pick the foods. Obviously, I won't be able to control all the food Maggie eats, but I'm trying to help her learn to make good decisions on her own. ♥

## ACTIVITY CORNER

### Active chores

Pitching in around the house can add up to better fitness—as well as a more responsible teen.



• **Housework.** Make a list of chores, and have your child pick different ones each week. He'll get a workout by vacuuming, sweeping, scrubbing sinks, cleaning mirrors, and carrying laundry baskets up and down the stairs. For an extra incentive, have him check online or in an exercise guide for the calories he'll burn for each chore.

• **Yard work.** Fixing up your lawn can help tone your youngster's whole body. Have him weed, plant, or rake to work his upper body and mow the grass to exercise his legs. *Idea:* Lawn work can be fun to do together. Let your child pick music to listen to while you're outside. ♥

## In the Kitchen

### New sandwich combos

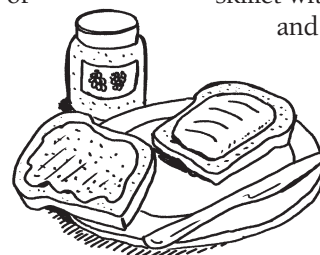
Is your child tired of PB&J? For a new spin on the standard sandwich, suggest interesting combinations like these.

**Chicken & raspberry jam.** Spread raspberry jam on a slice of whole-wheat bread. Add a thin piece of low-fat sharp cheddar cheese and a couple slices of leftover chicken. Top with another slice of whole-wheat bread.

**Ham & apples.** Mix yellow deli mustard and honey, and spread on marbled rye bread.

Top with thin slices of apple (tart Granny Smiths work well), smoked ham, and another piece of bread.

**Zucchini & sun-dried tomatoes.** Mix chopped sun-dried tomatoes into whipped cream cheese. Then, spray a skillet with nonfat cooking spray, and sauté sliced zucchini, onions, and mushrooms. Cut a multi-grain focaccia in half. Spread the sauce on one side, and fill with the vegetables. ♥



### 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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