

Teen Food & Fitness

Healthy Ideas for Middle and High School Students

October 2008

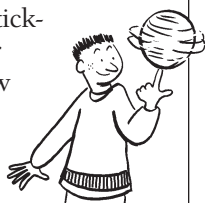
Stonington Public Schools Nutrition Services

Tim Paquette, Director of School Nutrition

FAST TAKES

Build a resume

Playing sports is not only good for your teen's health, it's also good for his future. Athletics are a great addition to a resume for college or a job. Sticking with one sport for several years will show commitment and perseverance—qualities that both admissions officers and employers like to see.



Safety warning

Mixing energy drinks and alcohol is a growing trend among youth. Remind your child that any use of alcohol is dangerous and illegal. Explain that alcohol contains depressants, and energy drinks have large doses of caffeine and other stimulants. Combining the two can speed up her heart rate and even lead to lung or heart failure.

Did You Know?

Pumpkins are a "super food," rich in fiber, vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, proteins, and healthy fats. Add fresh or canned pumpkin to pancakes and muffins. Use the seeds, too. You can toast them for a snack, toss into salads, or combine with cooked cauliflower pieces for a tasty side dish.



Just for fun

Q: How many oranges grow on trees?

A: All of them!



Sneak in veggies

Does your teen or tween say "no thanks" to vegetables? Here are ways to get him eating—and enjoying—them without even knowing it!

Where are they?

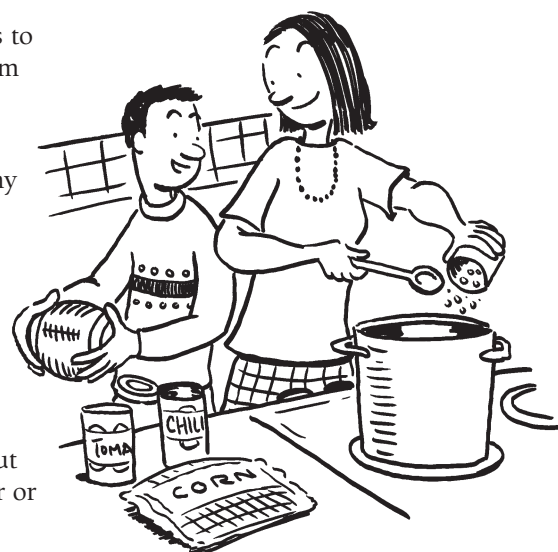
Vegetables can be mixed into many dishes that kids love:

- Add diced carrots to chili, or stir grated zucchini into spaghetti sauce.
- Microwave frozen peas, mash them with a fork, and mix with lean ground beef before making meatloaf or hamburgers.
- Purée cooked vegetables (butternut squash, broccoli) in a food processor or blender, and stir into any soup.

All day long

Think about putting vegetables into meals and snacks throughout the day:

- For a quick breakfast burrito, fill a spinach tortilla with scrambled eggs and tomato salsa. At lunchtime, use a red pepper or an eggplant spread instead of mayonnaise on your child's sandwich. *Tip:* Pick up jars of veggie spreads on your next trip to the grocery store.
- If your youngster enjoys Chinese food, try preparing a simple stir-fry at home. Sauté chicken or beef strips in a marinade sauce, toss in fresh or frozen cut-up vegetables, and stir until everything is cooked through.
- Many kids who regularly refuse vegetables will happily eat them raw. Try baby carrots



with hummus, or green beans, snow peas, and cucumbers with low-fat ranch dressing. *Tip:* Put these vegetables out when your child is really hungry—right after school or close to dinnertime—and he'll be more likely to eat them. ♥

Cut the calories

If your child needs to lose weight, share these calorie-cutting ideas with her:

- ▲ Make an open-faced sandwich. Tuna or turkey will taste the same with half the bread.
- ▲ Choose water over juice and sports drinks.
- ▲ Order thin-crust rather than thick-crust pizza.
- ▲ Take the skin off chicken before cooking or eating it.
- ▲ Get the smallest-size popcorn at the movies.
- ▲ Switch to fat-free milk.
- ▲ Leave the cheese off your hamburger.
- ▲ Take a smaller piece of cake, and cut it from the center (rather than an edge piece with extra icing). ♥



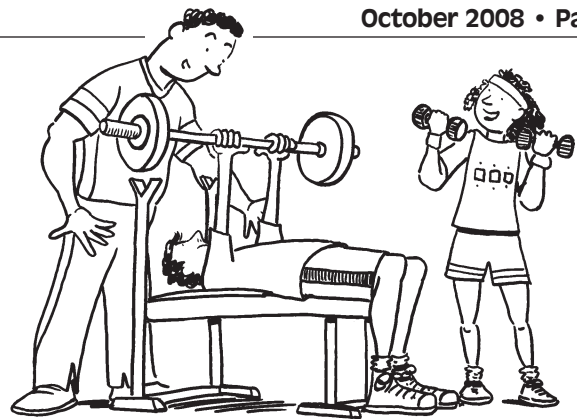
Building confidence

Feeling strong is a great way for teenagers to feel confident. Help boost your children's body image—and their self-esteem—with these ideas.

Strength training

As your kids get older, they can begin lifting weights. Talk to their PE teachers or coaches for advice. Perhaps there is an after-school gym program they can join, an older student they can work out with, or a training program they can follow. *Safety Note:* Be sure your children are supervised when lifting weights.

Help your teens develop a plan that slowly builds the challenge—for example, by adding new exercises or increasing the pounds they lift. Encourage them to chart their progress.



As they meet each fitness goal, they'll take pride in their accomplishments.

Martial arts

Practicing karate, tae kwon do, judo, or t'ai chi can teach your children self-discipline and coordination. As they master the moves, they'll gain strength as well as confidence.

To get them started, look for classes at the YMCA or a local community center. Or they might train at home by following videos checked out from the library.♥

ACTIVITY CORNER

The big five

Here's a daily routine guaranteed to improve your teen's fitness. Encourage him to gradually work up to more repetitions of each exercise.



1. Lunge. Take a giant step forward to a bent knee, and squat down until your back knee nearly touches the floor. Alternate legs.



2. Squat. Bend your knees, and lower to a "sit" position, almost touching the floor. Stand straight up.

3. Pushup. Lie facedown with hands palm-down at shoulder level. Using your arms, push your body up, and then lower to the ground.

4. Bicycle crunch. Lie on your back with your hands behind your head and your knees raised at a right angle. Alternate bringing each elbow to the opposite knee.

5. Bench dip. Sit at the edge of a chair, legs outstretched, with your hands gripping the seat behind you. Slide off the chair, dip to a squatting position, and raise back up.♥

PARENT TO PARENT

Read the list!

Every day it was the same story—my daughter Susan complained that she couldn't find anything to eat in the house. I got so tired of listening to her and so tired of listing the possibilities.

Then, my neighbor Kim gave me some great advice. She suggested that I post a list of snack ideas on the fridge. "That will put her, not you, in charge of finding something to eat," she told me.

So I looked through the pantry, the freezer, and the refrigerator and came up with a list of healthy snacks. String cheese, apples and peanut butter, frozen veggie burgers ... the list was pretty long.

I told Susan that for one week, she couldn't ask me what to eat until she read the list. And guess what? It turned out there *was* food in the house after all!♥



In the Kitchen

Rice bowls

Cook up a batch of healthy brown rice, add toppings, and you'll have a great meal or snack for your kids (and yourself). Try these combinations:

- Cooked peas, sliced carrots, broccoli pieces, and diced chicken. Stir in low-sodium teriyaki sauce and a dash of grated ginger.
- Shrimp sautéed with diced green bell peppers and onion. Top with chopped tomatoes.
- Corn (canned or frozen), canned kidney beans, chopped onions, and pulled pork. Stir in barbecue sauce.
- Cooked chicken sausage, shredded mozzarella cheese, sliced mushrooms, and marinara sauce. Sprinkle with oregano.



Note: Rice bowls are a great way to use up leftovers. Heat up last night's meat or chicken, toss in leftover vegetables, and add a sauce.♥

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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