Healthy Ideas for Middle and High School Students   April 2019

Teen Food & Fitness

Hitting the road doesn’t have to mean hitting up fast-food places. Keep bellies full and energy levels high by encouraging your tween or teen to pack or choose healthier “fast food.” Try these tips.

Stock up
Ask your tween to create “fill-up” stations so he can grab nutritious snacks on his way out the door. On a shelf in the fridge, he could arrange portable options like small yogurt cartons, string cheese, and snack-size bags of carrots. And he might fill a basket to keep in the pantry with non-perishables like protein bars, whole-grain crackers, and popcorn.

Scope out options
Ask your tween to find more nutritious “fast food” around town. Knowing where these restaurants are located can help him make better decisions in a pinch. For example, at a bagel shop, he could get a whole-wheat bagel with fat-free cream cheese and a piece of fresh fruit. And a coffeehouse may carry prepared salads or cheese and fruit packs.

Did You Know?
If your tween wears braces, she can still enjoy her favorite tastes—with a few adjustments. Instead of eating tortilla chips, she could cut soft tortillas into triangles to dip in guacamole. Nut butter on whole-wheat bread is a good alternative to nuts. And a soft pretzel bun dipped in mustard may satisfy her craving for pretzels.

Move more with outdoor chores
Turn springtime chores into an opportunity for your child to exercise. Consider these suggestions.

- Mow. Show her how to mow the yard and pack cuttings into lawn bags. She’ll work up a sweat and get her heart pumping.

- Garden. Encourage your tween to try gardening. She might plant flowers or vegetables in your yard or volunteer at a school or community garden. Pulling weeds and hauling and spreading mulch all strengthen arm muscles.

- Wash. Have your teen wash windows or power-wash siding and fences. She will get a workout as she bends, stretches, and scrubs.

Lexington School District One
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**Beyond rice and pasta**

There’s a whole world of grains out there for your teen to discover. Encourage her to eat more fiber-rich whole grains by offering her different varieties. Here are a few ideas.

**Quinoa swap.** Broccoli and cheese quinoa casserole, anyone? For an easy way to introduce your child to quinoa, swap it into dishes she likes that call for rice, such as casseroles and stir-fries.

**“Noodle” soup.** Add barley to soups. It’s tasty in place of pasta in chicken noodle soup, and it makes vegetable soup heartier. Suggest that your teen stir in barley as she would noodles and cook until tender.

**Greens + grains.** Whole grains give more flavor and texture to salads. Sprinkle cooked bulgur into a green salad. Bulgur can even be the main ingredient in an entree salad. Combine it with cooked corn, tomatoes, feta cheese, and your teenager’s favorite dressing.

Note: At least half of your child’s grains should be whole. Tweens and teens need 3–4 servings of whole grains each day—a serving equals about 1–2 cup cooked.

**Save time and effort with these flavorful, nutritious skillet dishes.**

**“Unstuffed” peppers.** Brown 1 lb. lean ground turkey in a skillet over medium heat. Stir in 2 cups cooked brown rice, 1 can diced tomatoes, 1 diced green pepper, and 1 tsp. chili powder. Heat through, and top with 1 cup shredded low-fat cheddar.

**Tomato basil penne.** Combine 12 oz. uncooked whole-grain penne, 1 pint grape tomatoes, 2 tbsp. garlic powder, 1 tbsp. each onion powder and dried basil, 2 tbsp. olive oil, and 4 1/2 cups water in a skillet. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat, and simmer 9 minutes, until pasta is tender.

**Veggie pizza.** Press 1 lb. refrigerated whole-wheat pizza dough into an ovenproof skillet (coated with cooking spray). Cook over medium heat for 2 minutes. Top with 1–2 cup low-sodium marinara, sliced mushrooms, fresh spinach, and 1/2 cup low-fat shredded mozzarella. Brush the edges with olive oil, and bake at 450° for about 30 minutes, until the cheese melts.

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**In the Kitchen**

**Skillet suppers**

- **Quinoa swap.**
- **“Noodle” soup.**
- **Greens + grains.**
- **“Unstuffed” peppers.**
- **Tomato basil penne.**
- **Veggie pizza.**

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**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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