It's a familiar scenario for parents of tweens and teens: kids raiding the fridge even though they just ate, and outgrowing their clothes seemingly overnight. Try these tips to give your child the extra fuel she needs during growth spurts.

**Plan for after-school snacks**

Growing teens often come home hungry—especially if they have an early lunch period. That means your child may want a substantial after-school snack. She might wrap up leftovers at dinner to eat for tomorrow's snack. Or perhaps she'll add hummus, carrots, and snap peas to the grocery list. Tip: Encourage her to wash down her snack with nonfat milk, which contains calcium for her developing bones.

**Choose satisfying foods**

Offer healthy and hearty foods to fill your tween up—and make her less likely to reach for chips and cookies. High protein foods, such as lean chicken, eggs, and low-fat cottage cheese, can stave off hunger. Fiber-rich foods are filling, too, so have her eat plenty of whole grains (brown rice, whole-wheat pasta) and leafy greens (arugula, kale).

**Provide healthy fats**

Your teen's brain is growing rapidly, too, which means it needs omega-3s (good fats) found in foods like avocados, fish, and nut or seed butter. She could combine mashed avocado with canned tuna and spread it on whole-wheat crackers. Or she might enjoy a peanut butter and banana sandwich on whole-grain bread.

**Prevent injuries**

By following a few simple rules, your active child has a better chance of avoiding injuries.

- **Use the right equipment.** Helmets, pads, and supportive shoes all go a long way toward keeping your tween safe. Tip: Ask his coach or a store clerk to check the fit.

- **Increase activity gradually.** If your child does strength training, have him start with lighter weights or fewer reps and add more as he gets stronger. For running, he should steadily build up to longer distances and a faster pace. Encourage him to pay attention to his body and cut back if necessary.

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

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**Easy as Pi!**

Celebrate Pi Day on March 14 by challenging your tween to come up with healthy “pie” recipes. Maybe he’ll pick a crustless quiche or a pizza with a cauliflower crust. No matter what size pie he makes, its circumference will be approximately 3.14 times its diameter!

**Did You Know?**

Replacing red meat with other proteins may help your teen have a healthier heart. Swap ground beef for lean ground turkey in burgers and meatloaf. Serve fish instead of pot roast, or give beans the starring role in tacos, burritos, and chili.

**Just for fun**

Q: Why couldn't the orange make it up the mountain?

A: It ran out of juice.
Strategies for picky eaters

Mark didn’t think he liked asparagus until he tried it roasted and topped with Parmesan cheese. And Jenna decided she liked black beans after her parents kept serving them.

These tweens are becoming more well-rounded eaters, and your child can, too. Here’s how.

Start small. Give him a small amount of a new food first, then gradually increase it. Adding chopped mushrooms to spaghetti sauce may help your tween realize that he likes the flavor. Next, maybe he’ll eat mushrooms in scrambled eggs or on pizza.

Rotate regularly. Consider serving at least one new food each week. You could have quinoa this week, then tofu the next. Keep the new foods in your regular dinner lineup, even if your child doesn’t like them at first. Research shows kids may have to try the same food 12–14 times before they develop a taste for it.

Experiment with cooking methods. Help your tween discover that the same food can taste different depending on how it’s cooked. If boiled brussels sprouts don’t appeal to him, try roasting them. Or if he’s not a fan of steamed spinach, he might find that he likes raw baby spinach in salads.

Twists on diner classics

Does your child love going to the diner? Bring the diner home—in a healthier way—with these recipes.

Cinnamon oatmeal pancakes
Grind 1–2 cups old-fashioned oats in a blender. Add 1 egg, 1 cup nonfat milk, 1–2 tsp. baking powder, 1–2 tsp. cinnamon, and a pinch of salt. Blend until smooth. Drop ¼ cup batter in a hot skillet (coated with nonstick spray) and cook until golden, flipping once. Top with crushed berries.

Strawberry “milkshake”
Blend 1 cup frozen banana chunks, 1 cup frozen strawberries, 2 cups nonfat milk or nondairy milk, and ¼ tsp. vanilla extract until smooth and creamy.

Dancing makes it fun to work up a sweat. Encourage your teen to pick her favorite upbeat playlist and try these cardio ideas.

1. Skater glide. No ice is required for this move! Extend your right arm to the side with your left arm across your chest. Cross your left leg behind your right and squat slightly. In a fluid motion, hop left while swinging both arms left and switching arm and leg positions. Keep “gliding” back and forth quickly.

2. “Conga” line. Ask friends and family members to line up, with hands on the shoulders of the person in front of them. Snake around the room, copying the leader’s moves. For an extra challenge, add the limbo. Let two people hold a broom horizontally, while the other dancers bend backward to go underneath without touching the broom or the floor. Lower the broom each time the conga comes around.

In the Kitchen

Tomato grilled cheese
Make a sandwich on whole-grain bread with reduced-fat cheddar cheese and tomato slices. Brush the outside of the sandwich lightly with olive oil. Grill in a heated pan for 5 minutes per side, or until golden.

Q & A
Q: What should we do to help our teenage son manage his diabetes?
A: One way you might help is by making dietary changes as a family. If your teen isn’t the only one who has to limit sweets or cut down on carbs, it could make healthy eating easier for him.

Also, regular physical activity is important for everyone, and it helps to control blood sugar in people with diabetes. Talk to your son’s doctor about how much and what kind of exercise is appropriate for him.

Then, encourage him to find activities he enjoys and stick with them. Join him to help him stay motivated—and to keep the whole family more active.

Managing diabetes

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ACTIVITY CORNER

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Strawberry “milkshake”
Blend ⅔ cup frozen banana chunks, 1 cup frozen strawberries, 2 cups nonfat milk or nondairy milk, and ¼ tsp. vanilla extract until smooth and creamy.
Fast food can be healthy food—and here’s a collection of recipes that show you how. Each one is high in nutrition and low in fat, sugar, and salt. Plus, they’re easy for you or your teen to make. (When younger children are cooking, stay nearby for safety’s sake.) Bon appétit!

Note: Each recipe makes four servings.

**Breakfast**

**Apple Raisin French Toast**

There’s no need for syrup in this naturally sweet, nutritious twist on the breakfast standard.

Combine eggs and milk in a shallow bowl. Dip bread slices into mixture to coat both sides. Bake in a preheated waffle baker or nonstick pan until browned, turning once. Spread apple butter on top, and sprinkle with pecans.

**You’ll need:**
- 2 beaten eggs or ½ cup egg substitute
- ½ cup fat-free milk
- 8 slices raisin bread
- ¼ cup apple butter
- 2 tsp. chopped pecans

**Fruit Smoothie**

Smoothie flavors are limited only by your child’s imagination. Suggest this strawberry-orange version, or have him invent his own.

Combine all ingredients in a blender until no large chunks remain. Top with a whole strawberry, and drink up!

**You’ll need:**
- 2 cups fat-free milk
- 1 cup fat-free vanilla yogurt
- ½ cup 100% orange juice
- 2 cups fresh or frozen strawberries

**Lunch**

**Colorful Couscous Salad**

Couscous cooks in a jiffy. Use this recipe to make a healthy salad your family is sure to love.

Combine couscous and boiling water in a large bowl, and cover for 5 minutes. Fluff with a fork, and cool for a few minutes. Stir in mint, tomatoes, bell pepper, and raisins. Add dressing, and mix well.

*Note:* This salad is good warm, at room temperature, or cold.

**You’ll need:**
- 1 cup couscous
- 1½ cups boiling water
- ½ cup fresh mint, chopped
- 9—10 grape tomatoes, halved
- 1 red or green bell pepper, diced
- 2 tsp. raisins
- Low-fat Italian dressing

**Pita Pocket**

If you want freshness, fiber, and flavor, this is the lunch for you and your teen.

Slit the pitas, and spread mustard inside. Stuff each one with mushrooms, tomato, and cucumber. Add turkey (or omit for a vegetarian version). Spoon in the mashed avocado. Wrap the sandwiches in foil to enjoy on the go, or savor them at home.

**You’ll need:**
- 4 whole-wheat pitas
- Dijon mustard
- 8 mushrooms, sliced
- 1 tomato, sliced
- 1 cucumber, peeled and sliced
- 4 lean turkey slices (optional)
- 2 ripe avocados, peeled and mashed
**Dinner**

**Chicken Tacos**

For a fun dinner, set up a “taco bar.” Put each ingredient in a separate bowl, and line up the bowls on the kitchen table or counter. Then, let everyone make their own tacos.

Sprinkle taco mix over chicken, and gently stir. Fill taco shells with desired ingredients.

**You’ll need:**
- 4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts, cooked and shredded
- 1/2 packet low-sodium taco seasoning mix
- 1 lb. of refried beans
- 1 tomato, diced
- 1/2 head lettuce, shredded
- 1 cup low-fat Monterey Jack cheese, shredded
- 1 small jar salsa
- 4 taco shells

**Pasta Time**

Almost in the time it takes to cook the pasta, this hearty sauce will be ready.

Cook pasta according to package directions. Meanwhile, sauté onion and garlic in a pan (coated with non-stick olive oil spray) until soft, about 5 minutes. Add ground beef, if desired, and cook until no pink remains. Add herbs, tomatoes, and artichokes, and cook 2–3 minutes longer. Stir in tomato sauce, and heat until warm. Drain pasta and top with sauce. Serve with Parmesan.

**You’ll need:**
- pasta, any style (multi-grain if possible)
- onion, sliced
- garlic, crushed
- 1 lb. lean ground beef (optional)
- basil
- oregano
- tomatoes, chopped
- artichoke hearts, chopped
- tomato sauce

**Fruit Dip**

This is a great way to add fruit to your family’s diet. Dip and enjoy!

In a blender or food processor, combine all ingredients, except fruit, until smooth. Chill in refrigerator, about 2 hours. Use as a dip for the fresh fruit. **Tip:** Thread fruit pieces onto wooden skewers for a kid-friendly presentation.

**You’ll need:**
- 1/3 cup fat-free ricotta cheese
- 1/3 cup fat-free vanilla yogurt
- 1 tbsp. powdered sugar
- 1 tbsp. orange juice
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- assorted fruit (strawberries, blueberries, grapes, sliced apples, sliced pears, cubed cantaloupe)

**Hummus and Veggies**

This healthy Mediterranean snack is sure to please kids in any country.

In a blender or food processor, mix beans, oil, garlic, and lemon juice. Lightly salt, if desired. Dip the pita pieces and vegetables into the hummus. **Tip:** Add hummus to a sandwich, and you’ll add flavor and fiber.

**You’ll need:**
- 1 15-oz. can garbanzo beans (chickpeas)
- 1/4 cup sesame oil
- 1 clove garlic, crushed
- juice of 1 lemon
- salt (optional)
- whole-wheat pita, torn into pieces
- assorted raw vegetables (carrots, celery, cauliflower, broccoli, sugar snap peas)

**Snacks**

**Popcorn, Italian Style**

Go ahead—have another handful of this guilt-free snack.

In a small bowl, combine olive oil, basil, and pepper. Drizzle over popcorn, and stir until coated. Sprinkle on cheese.

**You’ll need:**
- 2 cups air-popped popcorn
- 1 tbsp. olive oil
- ½ tsp. dried basil
- pepper to taste

**Grab ‘n’ go**

Sometimes even the fastest recipes aren’t fast enough. When your child has to get out the door in five minutes, try these quick and healthy choices.

- **Mexican breakfast wrap:** Make these the night before and refrigerate. For 1 wrap, whisk together 2 eggs and 1/4 cup of fat-free milk, and scramble (in a pan coated with nonstick spray) until set. Place on a whole-wheat tortilla, top with salsa and shredded low-fat cheddar cheese, and roll up. (Ready to microwave in the morning.)

- **Trail mix:** In a zip bag, combine equal amounts of nuts (peanuts, cashews, almonds), whole-grain cereal, raisins, and sunflower seeds.

- **Apple peanut butter treat:** Spread peanut butter on a slice of whole-wheat bread. Top with thin apple slices, and fold in half.

- **In the pantry:** whole-wheat pretzels, baked crackers, low-fat granola bars, baggies filled with whole-grain cereal

- **In the fridge:** fresh whole fruit (tangerines, apples, pears, plums, peaches), low-fat string cheese, baby carrots, celery sticks

**Editor’s Note:** Teen Food & Fitness™ is reviewed by a registered dietitian. Consult a physician before beginning any major change in diet or exercise.