

# Teen Food & Fitness

Healthy Ideas for Middle and High School Students

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Manitou Springs School District # 14

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## FAST TAKES



### Choose the cafeteria

Even if your child's school has an open-lunch policy allowing kids to go off campus, encourage him to eat at the cafeteria. His school offers much healthier options than the fast food places he is likely to go to. And the meal will probably cost less, too. *Bonus:*



Your teen won't risk being late for his next class if he's already on campus.

### Fish tale

Going fishing with your tween or teen is a great way to enjoy the outdoors together. If you don't have fishing poles, you might borrow some from friends or find inexpensive ones at a garage sale or sporting goods store. Depending on where you fish, you could "catch and release"—or bring the fish home to make into a healthy dinner.

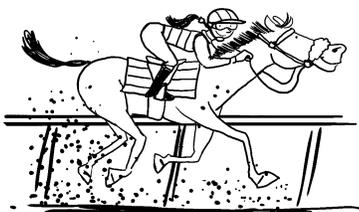
### Did You Know?

Many salad dressings, especially creamy ones, contain added fat. Instead of reaching for bottled dressing, suggest that your child squeeze fresh lemon juice and drizzle a little olive oil over her salad. Keeping the dressing simple will deliver a "cleaner" flavor and let her really taste the vegetables she's eating.

### Just for fun

**Q:** What can go as fast as a racehorse?

**A:** The jockey!



## Go on a screen diet

Between TV, video games, laptops, and smartphones, today's teenagers spend on average seven hours a day in front of a screen. Yikes! That's a lot of screen time, and it can lead to unhealthy eating habits and less physical activity. Guide your child to cutting back with these ideas.



### Track your time

Your teen may not realize how her screen time adds up. Have her keep a record for a week. Then, discuss ways to replace some of it with active time. For instance, she could list 10 alternatives (practice soccer skills, take a walk) and pull out the list instead of turning on the TV when she's bored. *Tip:* Your child will take her cues from you. Consider keeping your own log, and discuss changes you'll make, too.

### Create screen-free zones

Designate places in your home as "screen free." Talk with your teen about where these spots should be. You might pick her bedroom, since watching TV and texting can disrupt her study and sleep

time. Another place may be the kitchen—when people watch TV during meals, they don't pay as much attention to what they're eating and tend to eat more.

### Keep it unplugged

Once you've decided on screen-time rules, make it easier for her to stick to them. Say she's only supposed to play video games or text after her homework is done. She could unplug the game console or turn off her phone until then. *Idea:* Build in exercise time by challenging your child to work out for the same number of minutes that she watches TV. 🍎

## Great workout! What should I eat?

After a workout, your child needs to refuel. Here are strategies to share.

- **Don't wait long.** Suggest that he have a healthy snack 15–20 minutes after working out.
- **Combine proteins and carbohydrates.** Some tasty combos include hummus on a hard-boiled egg, turkey with string cheese and apple slices, or tuna chunks (water-packed) on a slice of whole-wheat bread.
- **Drink milk.** Milk provides important nutrients and replaces the fluids and electrolytes (sodium, potassium) lost through sweat.

*Note:* Post-workout snacks are only necessary after moderate to intense workouts or sports practices lasting an hour or more. Did your teen break a sweat, raise his heart rate, or breathe hard? Then he probably needs that recovery snack! 🍌



# Food allergies—away from home

Food allergies don't need to hold your teen back. These tips can help him, no matter where he goes.

**At school.** Encourage your child to let his teachers and close friends know about his allergies. Sitting with one of those friends at lunch means he'll have someone to lend support or alert others if he has a reaction.

**At a friend's.** Your teen may need to take his own food when he goes to other people's houses. Also, have him write down his allergy information on a card. He should include what he's allergic to, symptoms of a reaction, and what to do if he



has one. Then, he can place the card in a bag with his EpiPen (if he needs one) so it's easy to find in an emergency.

**At a restaurant.**

Restaurants are becoming better at cooking for people with food allergies. But your teen may feel shy about questioning the server. To put him at ease, practice what to say. He could look up the menu ahead of time so he knows what to order. But he should ask at the restaurant, too, in case some ingredients aren't listed. ♣



## Q & A Are energy drinks OK?

**Q:** My son has at least one energy drink a day. He says they help him stay alert at school, but I'm worried they may be harmful. Any suggestions?

**A:** Energy drinks have become popular among teens. But you're right to be concerned about how often your son is drinking them.



The way these drinks keep him alert is with large doses of caffeine. While an 8-oz. coffee contains about 100 milligrams of caffeine, energy drinks can pack up to 242 milligrams per serving! In the short term, this could give him jitters. Experts are still studying the long-term effects, which may include high blood pressure.

Explain your concerns to your son. Then, talk about healthier ways to stay energized, like getting enough sleep, eating right, and exercising regularly. ♣

## ACTIVITY CORNER

### Frisbee for one

While your tween may be used to throwing a Frisbee with a friend, these three activities are good for times when friends aren't around.



**1. Target practice.** Suggest that she create a target—maybe a hula hoop between two trees. Then, she can try to toss the Frisbee through the target. *Bonus:* This is great hand-to-eye coordination training for racquet sports like tennis or squash.

**2. Break the balloon.** Have your teen tape balloons of various sizes to a garage door or the outside wall of a house (stay away from windows). She could use a Frisbee to knock down or pop the balloons.

**3. Pass to the dog.** Let her teach your dog how to catch a Frisbee. No dog? Perhaps a neighbor has one that needs a little extra exercise. ♣

## In the Kitchen

### Fabulous fajitas

Fast, easy fajitas are fun to make for dinner. Try these versions with whole-grain tortillas.

**Spicy steak**

In a skillet, heat  $\frac{1}{2}$  tbsp. canola oil over medium-high heat. Add  $1\frac{1}{2}$  lbs. lean beef strips, and sprinkle with 1 tsp. chili powder, 1 tsp. paprika, and  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp. cumin. When cooked through, remove from pan. Toss 1 cup diced zucchini and 1 cup sliced mushrooms into the hot pan, and saute until soft. Combine the meat and vegetables. Add hot sauce to taste.

**Pico de gallo chicken**

Mix 2 chopped tomatoes,  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup diced onion, 2 cups cooked chicken,  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup chopped cilantro, and the juice from 1 lime. If desired, add chopped jalapeno or a dash of cayenne pepper to raise the heat!

**Veggie-licious**

Thaw 1 bag sliced bell pepper and 1 bag cauliflower. Saute them together in  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp. olive oil, and sprinkle with  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp. garlic powder. Remove from heat. Serve with crumbled cotija cheese. ♣



## OUR PURPOSE

To provide busy parents with practical ways to promote healthy nutrition and physical activity for their children.

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