

# Teen Food & Fitness

Healthy Ideas for Middle and High School Students

April 2016

Thompson Public Schools



## FAST TAKES

### Run for a cause

Training for a charity race gives your teenager another good reason to work out—he'll be helping others. He could run for a cause he cares about like fighting hunger or curing a disease. Have him look for fund-raising runs in newspaper listings, on websites of running and sporting goods stores, or on community center postings.



### Quick energy bites

These chewy treats make a great after-school snack. Soak 1 cup pitted dates in water and  $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp. almond extract for 1 hour. In a food processor or blender, combine drained dates, 1 cup nuts (pecans, walnuts),  $1\frac{1}{2}$  tsp. honey,  $\frac{1}{3}$  cup oatmeal, and 2 graham crackers. Form into balls (they'll be sticky), and refrigerate. Makes about 14.

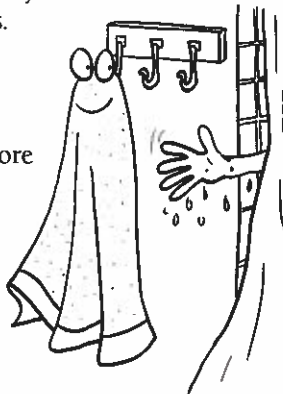
### Did You Know?

Your child's passwords can help her remember to eat right and exercise. Encourage her to use fitness and health passwords for her smartphone, email, apps, and social media accounts. She might pick combinations like "Exercise2Day" or "VeggiesRock2016." Each time she types in the password she'll be reminded to stay fit and choose healthy foods.

### Just for fun

**Q:** What gets wetter the more it dries?

**A:** A towel.



## Up the nutrition ante

With a few simple swaps, your tween or teen can make her everyday eating more nutritious—and just as delicious. Suggest changes like these.

### Salad boosters

Salad is good for you, but iceberg lettuce is less nutritious than many other greens. Making salads with spinach, for example, will give your child 11 times the amount of vitamin A, four times the vitamin C, and double the potassium. Then, add crunch to her salad with 1 tbsp. pistachios or sunflower seeds in place of butter-laden croutons. Nuts provide healthy fats along with protein, antioxidants, and vitamins.

### "Beefy" mushrooms

Even the leanest beef can't compete with mushrooms. Fat-free and low in sodium, mushrooms contain vitamins and minerals—and no cholesterol. Plus, mushrooms have a hearty flavor that mimics beef. Substitute diced mushrooms



for half or all the ground beef in spaghetti sauces, casseroles, or tacos.

### Banana "ice cream"

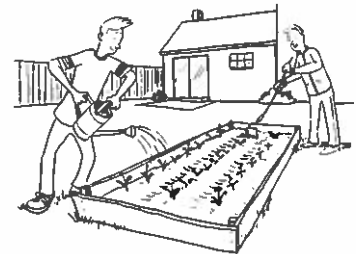
High in potassium and low in fat, salt, and sugar, bananas offer a satisfying alternative to ice cream. Slice ripe bananas into chunks, place in a plastic bag, and freeze at least 2 hours. Puree the pieces in a food processor or blender until creamy. Eat right away, or freeze until solid. *Idea:* Stir a little peanut butter or cocoa powder into the banana puree before freezing. ●

## The joy of gardening

This spring, consider planting a garden with your child—he'll reap benefits like these along with fresh vegetables.

- 1. Responsibility.** Each day, your teen will need to check if the plants need watering, weeding, or harvesting. Doing this at the same time each day will help him get into a routine.
- 2. Science skills.** Gardening brings classroom lessons to life. Have your child observe the plants' growing patterns and compare physical characteristics. Suggest that he keep a journal, recording weather conditions and sketching his plants.
- 3. Patience.** Planting and tending a vegetable garden requires a lot of waiting. Let him invite friends for meals that show off his patience—perhaps whole-wheat pasta tossed with sauteed vegetables.

*Note:* If you don't have a yard, use planter boxes or "grow bags," or look for a community garden where you can get your own plot. ●



# No sitting on the job!

Your teen can earn money and get a workout by landing a job that involves fitness. Here are ideas:

- As a camp counselor, he might coach sports, lead hikes or canoe outings, or run around the playground with children. Encourage him to look for a camp that matches his interests, such as soccer, lacrosse, or the outdoors. He could apply to county, city, or private day camps.



- Strong swimmers may enjoy spending the summer in the pool. As an instructor or a swim team coach, your teenager will teach youngsters strokes and other skills. Have him contact the Red Cross about certification.
- Live near a tourist area, state park, ballpark, or concert venue?

Hotels, parks, and event spaces often hire extra housekeeping or maintenance staff during the busy summer season.

- Food runners, servers, and table bussers are on their feet for entire shifts. Suggest that your child apply at local restaurants—they frequently staff up for the summer.

*Tip:* To build in even more physical activity, your teen could walk or bike to and from work if possible. ●



## PARENT TO PARENT Pressure to be thin

My daughter, Marlo, came home from a party complaining she's not thin enough. When I asked what happened, she said all the girls were talking about being "too fat." I let her know she's good the way she is, and I pointed out that she exercises regularly and usually eats well. She agreed, but she didn't seem convinced.

Later I looked up articles and found girls feel more pressure to be thin from friends than from TV or magazines. I shared that with her, and we discussed ways to respond during these conversations. For example, she might tell friends they're at a healthy weight or try to change the subject. She could also suggest they do something active together or trade nutritious recipes.



I'm sure Marlo will still feel pressure to look a certain way. But I'm glad she's comfortable talking to me, and I plan to follow up with her regularly. ●

## ACTIVITY CORNER

### Backyard fun with friends

Playing games outside isn't just for little kids. Your tween or teen can enjoy backyard games like these with her friends, too.

#### Dance tag

Like freeze tag, start with one person as "It" while the others run around trying not to be tagged. "It" tags players by touching them—but instead of staying still, they have to dance around. A player wins when all the other players are dancing.



#### "Basket" ball

Mark off a "court" with brightly colored towels at the four corners and a laundry basket at each end for goals. Divide into two teams, or play one-on-one. Set a time limit, say 15 or 30 minutes. Then, using a playground ball, make as many baskets as possible—and block as many shots as possible from the other team. Score one point for each basket. High score wins. ●

## In the Kitchen

### Bowled over

Easy to make and to personalize, meals in bowls are all the rage at popular restaurants. With these recipes, your teen can make his own bowls at home.

**Chicken & rice.** Combine 1 cup cooked brown rice and  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup each diced tomatoes, cooked chicken, and corn (canned, drained). Top with 1 tbsp. salsa. (1 serving)

**Apples & quinoa.** Cook 1 cup quinoa according to package directions. Heat 2 tsp. olive oil in a skillet. Sauté  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup each diced onions and apples until



soft. Stir in the quinoa. Put into a bowl, and sprinkle with  $1\frac{1}{2}$  tsp. lemon juice and salt and pepper to taste. (2 servings)

**Shrimp & noodles.** Whisk together 2 tbsp. low-sodium soy sauce, 2 tbsp. each honey and rice vinegar, and  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup low-sodium hoisin sauce. Set aside. In a skillet, heat 2 tsp. olive oil, and sauté 1 lb. peeled shrimp until pink, 1–2 minutes per side. Add the sauce and 12 oz. cooked rice noodles. Heat, and pour into bowls. *Optional:* Top with grated carrots and chopped scallions. (4–6 servings) ●

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

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