

# Teen Food & Fitness

Healthy Ideas for Middle and High School Students

September 2011



## FAST TAKES

### TV-free dining

Televisions are becoming more common in restaurants. Yet watching TV while you eat may lead to overeating—and it can keep your family from chatting while you eat. Consider choosing restaurants without televisions, or ask the hostess to seat your family as far away from a TV as possible.

### Lighten the load



Heavy backpacks can cause neck, shoulder, and back pain. To distribute weight

evenly, your child should use both shoulder straps (wider straps are better). Encourage her to leave books in her locker or at home when she can.

### Did You Know?

Greek yogurt contains more protein and less sugar than regular varieties. This added protein not only provides nutrients that will keep your teen's body strong, it will help him feel fuller, too. Pick up the nonfat plain variety, and stir in fresh berries to add flavor but no extra sugar.

### Just for fun

**Q:** How can you tell the difference between a can of chicken soup and a can of tomato soup?

**A:** Read the label!



## Gwinnett School Nutrition Program

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# Healthy habits

The beginning of the school year is the perfect time to remind your teen or tween about healthy eating. Here are a few ideas.

### Practice portion control

Point out the serving size information on food labels. Your teen might be surprised by the amounts. For example, a serving of cereal is usually  $\frac{1}{2}$ –1 cup. A serving size of your child's favorite crackers is much less than a bowlful. *Idea:* Offer small servings at meals. You might cut half a steak into pieces rather than putting the whole steak on the plate.

### Munch more vegetables and fruits

Teens need 4–5 servings of vegetables and 3–4 servings of fruit a day to get their fill of nutrients. Talk with your child about easy ways to fit in vegetables, like having two servings at dinner and lunch instead of just one. Every week for a month, bring home a new



fruit (star fruit, kumquats) for him to taste. *Tip:* He may need to try one several times before he likes it.

### Choose the cafeteria

Eating breakfast at school is a good way to avoid the morning rush at home and enjoy extra time with friends. Suggest that your teen select cold cereal with fat-free milk and fruit or a hot entrée like whole-wheat pancakes. Also, look over lunch menus together, and pick out the healthiest items (baked chicken, green vegetables, brown rice). Or he can visit the salad bar (and take just a little low-fat dressing) or have a turkey sandwich. ♥

## The power of the plate

Getting a healthy diet can be easy. How? Suggest that your child think about food choices based on how much room they take up on her plate. Share these new guidelines from the USDA:

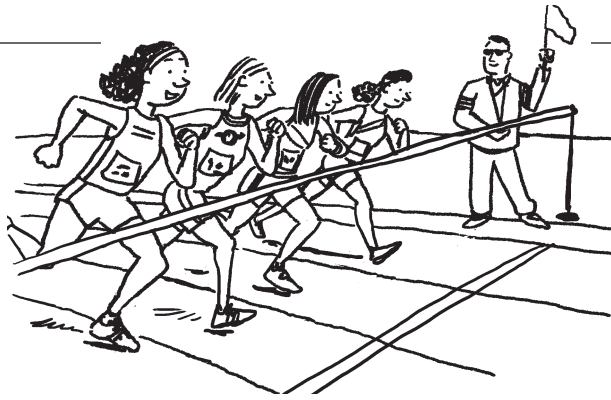
- Half of the plate should be vegetables and fruits.
- Grains should account for a little more than one-fourth of the plate. And whole-grain options, like brown rice and whole-wheat pasta, are recommended.
- Proteins such as chicken and beef are kept to a little less than one-fourth of the plate.
- Add fat-free or low-fat milk, cheese, yogurt, or other dairy product.

*Note:* See [www.choosemyplate.gov](http://www.choosemyplate.gov) for more information. ♥



# Life lessons of sports

Sports can teach your child so much more than how to throw a ball or make a basket. They can build character traits that will spill over into all parts of her life. Whether she's on a team or competes individually, she'll be learning...



playing her best. Encourage her to budget her time carefully so she can fit in practices and games around schoolwork, other activities, a job, and family time.

**Responsibility.** Sports help your teenager learn to keep commitments to coaches and teammates—and herself. Other players count on her to do her part by showing up and

**Perseverance.** Your youngster won't start off running a six-mile race—she'll work up to it. And there will be times when her team loses or she doesn't perform as well as she'd like. These are opportunities for your child to practice working hard and keeping at it. Suggest that she track her progress or put in extra time on drills, for example.

**Respect for her body.** It's important for your teen to take care of her body. She'll find that getting enough sleep and eating right will help keep her strong on and off the field. ♥

## ACTIVITY CORNER Add muscle



Strength training builds muscle, speeds up metabolism, and improves overall health. And your child doesn't need a lot of fancy equipment or a gym membership to get started. Share these suggestions:

- Sit-ups and push-ups are a great way to start working muscles. Begin by doing 8–10 repetitions of two or three sets, resting in between. Try to do these every other day.

- Pick up 3- or 5-pound weights at a sports store or garage sale. Start with simple exercises such as biceps curls to increase muscle definition in the arms. Gradually use heavier weights (10-pound) and increase the number of repetitions. You might talk to your gym teacher for pointers and exercises to do at home.



- Getting the technique right is critical when strength training. Check out exercise videos. They can guide you through performing muscle-building exercises the right way. ♥

## Q & A Family dinner

**Q:** Now that school is back in session, I'm wondering how I can make sure that having dinner together stays a priority. Any ideas?

**A:** It can be difficult to fit family meals into everyone's busy schedules. To help keep up this habit, schedule dinner as you would other activities. Having it a little later—say, at 7:00 instead of 6:00—may work better for your family. Also, try writing down meal choices a week in advance so you can pick up what you need with one trip to the grocery store. If planning for a week sounds overwhelming, plan and shop for three meals at a time.

Finally, involve the whole family. Your teen could be in charge of making dinner once a week. A younger child can help make a salad and set the table.

*Idea:* Consider eating "out" on certain days by taking a picnic to the park. ♥

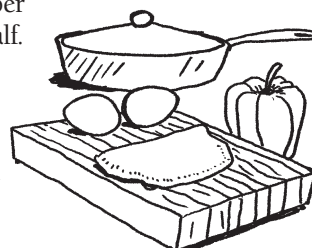


## In the Kitchen Egg-cellent ideas

For an inexpensive—and convenient—source of protein, try these egg entrées.

**Scrambled egg pocket.** Heat 1 tsp. olive or canola oil in a sauté pan over medium-high heat. Whisk 2 eggs and add to pan. Stir until set. Tuck the eggs and diced green pepper into a whole-wheat pita half.

**Easy egg quiche.** Pre-heat the oven to 350°. Whisk 4 eggs, ½ cup flour, and 1½ cups nonfat milk, and pour into a lightly greased 9-inch pie



pan. Add 1 cup chopped vegetables (mushrooms, onions, spinach), and top with ½ cup low-fat shredded sharp cheddar cheese. Bake for 40 minutes.

**Sunny egg sandwich.** Melt 1 tsp. butter in a skillet on medium heat. Crack 1 egg over the sizzling butter.

Cook until the white and yolk are both solid. With a spatula, place the egg on a piece of toasted whole-wheat bread. Top with a tomato slice and another slice of bread. ♥

### 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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