

# Teen Food & Fitness

Healthy Ideas for Middle and High School Students

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Franklin Special School District  
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## FAST TAKES

### Be a wise foodie

When it comes to food trends, encourage your tween to make healthy choices. For example, it's probably best for him to skip the sugar and calories from the latest flavored-latte craze. But ordering from a small-plates menu may be a trend worth trying, since he will get to sample reasonable portions of different foods.

### Do the "talk test"

Help your child discover her activity sweet spot with this easy way to judge how intense her exercise is. If she's aiming for moderate intensity (a brisk walk), she should be able to talk, but not sing. For something more vigorous, such as running, perhaps she can say only a few words without stopping for a breath.



### Did You Know?

More farmers' markets are staying open year-round, and others are opening earlier in the year—many in April. Also, many accept Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) cards. Visit [ams.usda.gov/local-food-directories/farmersmarkets](http://ams.usda.gov/local-food-directories/farmersmarkets) to find a market near you, and stock up on fresh produce and local meats and cheeses.

### Just for fun

**Q:** How do you fix a broken pizza?

**A:** With tomato paste!



## A healthy weight: What works?

Weight is a challenging topic for many tweens and teens. To help your child understand how to maintain or achieve a healthy weight, share these common questions from her peers.

**Q:** Now that I'm a teenager, it's harder to stay thin. What can I do?

**A:** Adolescence brings many changes to your body, so it's not unusual to notice a difference in your weight. First, think "healthy" vs. "thin." Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables, lean protein, and whole grains, and get at least an hour of physical activity a day. These habits will help you maintain a weight you're happy with and make you healthier overall.

**Q:** I eat right and work out, but I'm not losing weight. Will cutting out soda really make a difference?

**A:** You may not realize how much what you drink affects your weight. Sugary beverages sneak in lots of extra calories—usually without any health benefits. Swapping water or nonfat milk for soda will lower the total calories and sugar you



take in. *Idea:* Punch up plain water with frozen fruit or a squeeze of fresh orange or lemon.

**Q:** Should I stop eating gluten to lose weight?

**A:** Some people avoid gluten—found in grains like wheat and barley—for health reasons. But gluten-free breads and pastas may be just as high (or higher) in sugar, fat, and sodium as their wheat-containing cousins. Instead of eliminating any particular ingredient, it's important to focus on eating a variety of healthy foods. ♥

## A different kind of "rice"

"Riced" vegetables help your tween fit more produce into his diet—and they have fewer carbs than actual rice. Follow these steps to transform veggies into "rice."

**Step 1:** Break 1 head of broccoli or cauliflower into florets. Or peel 3 large carrots or 1 large sweet potato, and cut into bite-sized pieces.

**Step 2:** Pulse vegetables in a food processor or blender. Or grate carefully with a cheese grater. Each piece should be about the size of a grain of rice.

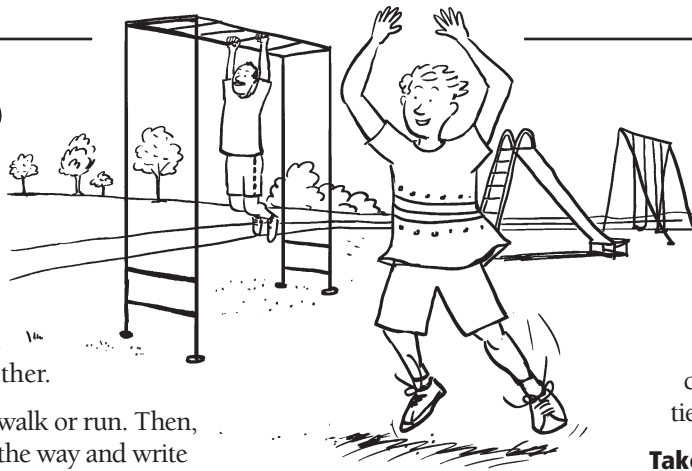
**Step 3:** Sauté the "rice" with 2 tbsp. olive oil in a skillet over medium-high heat until softened, about 3–5 minutes. Add salt and pepper to taste. ♥



# Outdoors: No membership required!

Why join a gym when your family can exercise in the great outdoors for free? Here are tips for taking advantage of warmer weather.

**Make a fitness circuit.** Choose a route for a walk or run. Then, have your child list 10 things you'll see along the way and write down an exercise for each one. For example, do 10 tricep dips on



every unoccupied park bench and 10 jumping jacks at each walk signal. *Tip:* Ask him to look for a route with a playground or fitness stations, and cross the monkey bars or do chin-ups or other activities at each stop.

**Take nature hikes.** Look for trails with different terrains. A steep hill will get your teen's heart pumping and strengthen his legs. One that includes stream crossings lets him practice balancing as he steps from rock to rock. *Idea:* During rest stops, work on flexibility while you appreciate nature. Do stretches silently, and count how many different animals you see or hear. ♡

## PARENT TO PARENT Should we buy organic?

My son Josh asked if we could start buying organic produce because it's healthier. I told him I wasn't sure if it was actually better for us, but I do know it's often more expensive. I suggested that we do some research together.

We learned that organic produce is grown without synthetic pesticides or fertilizers. Farmers have to use certain natural products to label their fruits and vegetables organic.



That is why some people prefer to buy organic versions of produce you don't peel, such as apples, blueberries, and spinach. We're going to watch for sales or coupons and consider buying organic fruits and vegetables like those occasionally. ♡

### 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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## ACTIVITY CORNER

### Start an active hobby

The word *hobby* may make your tween think of relaxing activities like knitting or coin collecting. But some hobbies can help your teen learn something new while staying active, too. Consider these ideas.

**Juggling.** Your tween's shoulders and arms will get a workout as she learns to keep balls in the air. She'll also work on hand-eye coordination. Suggest that she check out juggling books from the library or look up video tutorials online.

**Geocaching.** This high-tech treasure hunt lets your teen use GPS to find small hidden objects, such as charms, pens, or mini notebooks. Have her download a free app (see [geocaching.com](http://geocaching.com) to learn how to get started). Then she can walk around your neighborhood or a park with friends to locate items other players have hidden—and leave an object for each one she takes. It's an active way to put her problem-solving skills to the test! ♡



## In the Kitchen

### Awesome avocados

Avocados can be used for more than just guacamole. Containing healthy fats, this fruit has a mild flavor and a creamy texture.

#### Egg-in-a-hole

Preheat the oven to 425°. Cut an avocado in half, remove the pit, and place the halves on a baking sheet. Then, crack an egg into each crater. Bake 15 minutes, or until eggs are set. Top with salsa if desired.

#### Sandwich spread

Scoop out the flesh from 2 avocados, and

puree in a blender with the juice of 1 lime and  $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp. cayenne. Blend until smooth. You'll have a creamy spread to use on sandwiches instead of mayonnaise.

#### "Green goodness" dressing

Put the flesh of 1 avocado into a blender. Add 1 clove garlic, 2 chopped green onions,  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup olive oil,  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup each chopped fresh chives and parsley, and the juice of 1 lemon. Puree until well blended. Refrigerate in a jar, and enjoy as a dip for vegetables or drizzled on salads. ♡

