

# Teen Food & Fitness

Healthy Ideas for Middle and High School Students

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Icahn Charter School 4  
Michelle Allen, Principal



## FAST TAKES

### Chalkboard menu

Announcing menus

ahead of time can help get your teen on board with meal prep—and keep her from asking to eat out. Solicit ideas, and then scribble the dinner menu and fun activities for the week on a chalkboard in the kitchen. She'll be excited for what's to come, especially if it's a themed night like a Caribbean menu with music and limbo dancing!



### Hit the rec center

You probably don't have an indoor swimming pool or basketball court at home, but your local rec center just might. Make the rec center a regular part of your family's routine. You can go swimming together on weekends, or your teen could join a basketball team or take karate lessons. Suggest he check the website for open gym times, class schedules, and team signups.

### Did You Know?

One medium sweet potato has two to three times the recommended daily intake for vitamin A, which is important for growth and the immune system. To enjoy this nutritious vegetable, wash it, poke a few times with a fork, and bake at 375° for about 45 minutes. Even quicker: Microwave for 5–8 minutes. Serve plain, or top with applesauce and cinnamon.

### Just for fun

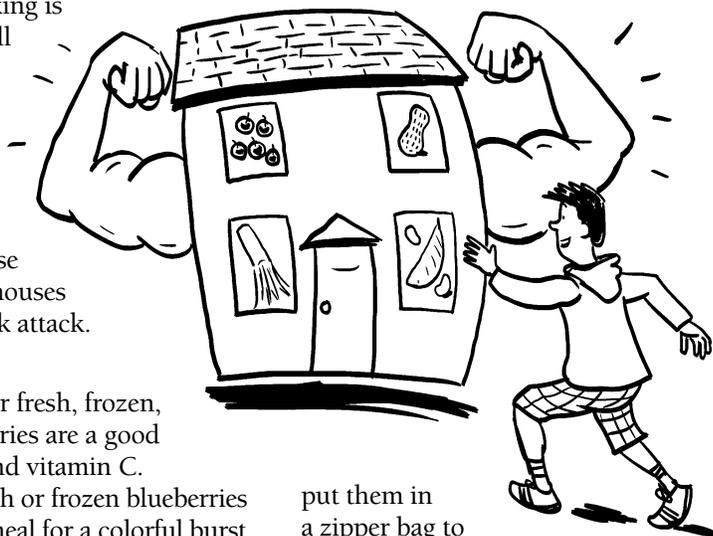
**Q:** Why don't eggs tell jokes?

**A:** They'd crack each other up!



## Powerhouse snacks

Healthy snacking is a smart way to fill nutrition gaps and keep your tween or teen energized throughout the day. Stock the kitchen with these nutrition powerhouses for his next snack attack.



### Blueberries

**Why:** Whether fresh, frozen, or dried, blueberries are a good source of fiber and vitamin C.

**How:** Add fresh or frozen blueberries to yogurt or oatmeal for a colorful burst of flavor. Mix dried blueberries into trail mix for a hint of sweetness.

put them in a zipper bag to fuel him through soccer practice.

### Edamame

**Why:** With a vibrant green color, edamame is full of protein, fiber, and iron.

**How:** Edamame is fun to eat straight from the pod—just squeeze, and the beans pop right out. Your teen can microwave frozen shelled edamame for a warm snack during a study session or

### String cheese

**Why:** Not just for young children, string cheese is both fun to eat and filled with a healthy dose of calcium and phosphorus.

**How:** Pull the strings apart, one by one. Or dip string cheese into leftover pasta sauce for a nutritious play on fried mozzarella sticks. 🍷

## Yummy condiments—without the salt

Condiments add lots of flavor but can be super salty. These tasty toppings are lower in salt, yet still yummy:

- Spoon fresh tomato salsa or a fruity peach or pineapple salsa onto fish, veggie burgers, or chicken.

- If your teen likes spicy food, offer crushed pepper flakes or cayenne rather than salty hot sauce.

- Buy low-sodium or no-salt-added varieties of ketchup, mustard, and barbecue sauce. If she goes out for sushi, suggest that she ask for low-sodium soy sauce.

**Tip:** You can even show your teen how easy it is to make ketchup at home. Mix a 6-oz. can of tomato paste with 2 tsp. white vinegar, 1 tsp. each garlic and onion powder, and a little brown sugar to taste. 🍷



# Put down the screens

If your teen is often glued to a screen, she's not alone. Studies show that teens spend more time watching TV, playing video games, and looking at other screens than they do sleeping.

Unfortunately, more than two hours of screen time a day is connected to higher blood pressure and cholesterol—and a greater chance of being overweight. Here are strategies to help your child put down the screens and pick up the physical activity.



## Make it a family effort.

Instead of watching TV together, go for a family walk or bike ride after dinner.

**Get out there.** Does your tween enjoy watching hockey, soccer, or ice skating? Encourage her to *play* the sport for more hours than she watches

others play it! She could try out for a school team, join a neighborhood league, or go to a skating rink with friends.

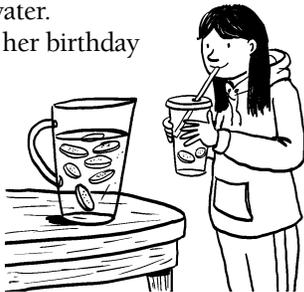
**Meet up IRL.** Suggest that your teen meet up with friends to go climbing or throw the football around rather than chatting with them by text or social media. She'll find it's more fun to be with people IRL (in real life). ♥



## PARENT TO PARENT Water is the best!

I was concerned about how much soda my 13-year-old daughter Aubrey was drinking and wanted her to switch to water. But Aubrey complained she didn't like water.

Then for her birthday treat we got manicures, and the nail salon had a pitcher of water with cucumber slices in it.



Wouldn't you know it—Aubrey thought that was great! So now we have a “spa water of the day” at home. Some days we add melon chunks, and other times we drop in frozen peach slices. We keep the pitcher in the fridge all day and set it on the table for meals.

It must be working. When we were at the store last week, Aubrey asked if she could get a refillable water bottle. She's planning to fill the bottle with water and add her own fruit combinations to take on the go. ♥

## ACTIVITY CORNER

### Start a running group

Running with friends is a fun—and free—way to stay active and be social. Share these ideas to get your teenager excited about starting his own running group:

- ✓ Reach out to friends who live nearby. That makes it easier to meet up regularly.
- ✓ Set a schedule. Find days and times that work best for the group, and add them to your calendars. This can create a *good* kind of peer pressure—teens won't want to let each other down by not showing up.
- ✓ Pick destinations. Running to the fountain in the park sounds more fun than tracking miles. Add variety by running a trail one day and a neighborhood loop the next.
- ✓ Step it up. For more of a challenge, add in jumping jacks or push-ups every half-mile. ♥



## In the Kitchen

### Pumpkin three ways

Pumpkins are not just for carving! They are packed with fiber and beta-carotene—and they're delicious, too. Try these recipes.

#### 1. Pumpkin butter

Combine a 15-oz. can of pumpkin puree, 2 tbsp. maple syrup, 2 tsp. pumpkin pie spice, and 1 tsp. cinnamon in a saucepan over medium heat. Stir occasionally for 15 minutes until the flavors blend. Use it to top toast or swirl into yogurt.

#### 2. Pumpkin soup

In a large pot, saute 1 tbsp. oil with 1 tbsp.

minced garlic and 1 chopped onion until soft. Add 3 cups pumpkin puree, 2 cups broth (vegetable or chicken), and 1 cup milk. Bring to a boil, and then simmer for 30 minutes. Pour into a blender to puree, reheat in pot, and serve.

#### 3. French toast

Beat 2 eggs, 2 tbsp. pumpkin puree, ¼ cup milk, ¼ tsp. pumpkin pie spice, and 1 tsp. honey. Dip 4 slices of whole-wheat bread into the mixture. In a pan coated with nonstick spray, cook until each side is browned. ♥



## OUR PURPOSE

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

Resources for Educators,  
a division of CCH Incorporated  
128 N. Royal Avenue • Front Royal, VA 22630  
540-636-4280 • rfeustomer@wolterskluwer.com  
www.rfeonline.com

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