

# Teen FOOD & FITNESS

Healthy Ideas for Middle and High School Students

April 2020

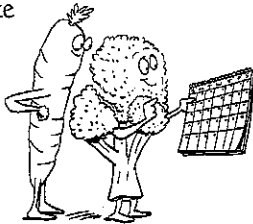
North Adams Community Schools  
Wellness Committee



## FAST TAKES

### It's veggie day!

Go meatless one day a week (or more) to enjoy plant-based meals and make the most of spring produce. Your child might look up vegetables that are in season and find nutritious recipes that call for them. *Examples:* asparagus quiche, spinach and mushroom enchiladas, spaghetti with spring peas.



### No muscles left behind

Whether your teen works out regularly or is just getting started, encourage her to pay attention to all her muscle groups for better overall strength. She could keep a log of her workouts or designate one day for leg exercises, another for core, and so on.

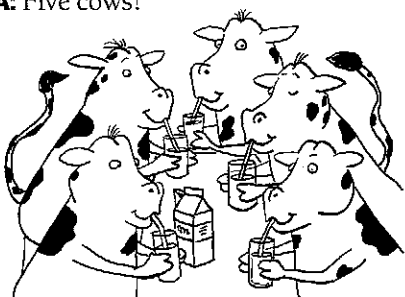
### Did You Know?

Being overweight raises the chances of a teen's face breaking out. In fact, moderate and severe acne is more common among heavier teens. Mention to your child that eating healthy foods and staying physically active may help lead to clearer skin.

### Just for fun

**Q:** What are five things that contain milk?

**A:** Five cows!



## Processed food Q&As

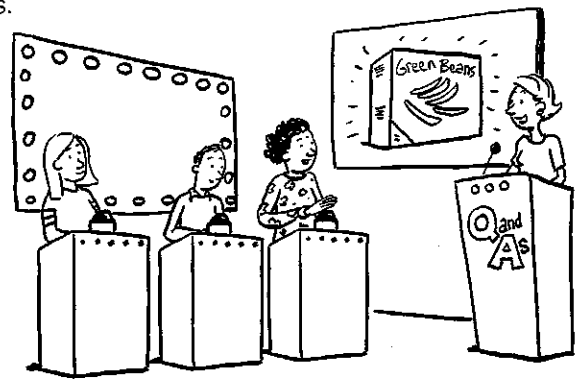
There's a lot of information to digest when it comes to processed foods. Here are answers to questions you and your teen may have.

### "Does processed = unhealthy?"

"Processed" simply means a food has been changed from its natural state. But that doesn't automatically make it bad for you. For instance, bagged lettuce, pasteurized milk, and tofu are processed *and* nutritious. Teach your child to limit overly processed foods, however, such as instant soups, hot dogs, and soda.

### "How can we cut back?"

Swap in whole foods or less processed alternatives. For snacks, your child could microwave a baked potato instead of grabbing a bag of potato chips, or eat a handful of nuts rather than an energy bar. For meals, she can make her own "TV dinners" by freezing individual portions of healthy leftovers to heat up on busy weeknights.



### "Should we buy frozen fruits and vegetables?"

Yes—if they don't have added sugar, salt, or sauces. Fruits and vegetables are quickly frozen at peak freshness, so they may actually provide more nutrients than fresh produce that's shipped long distances. They also keep a lot longer once you buy them. Suggest that your teenager choose packages that list fruits or vegetables as the only ingredients. ●

## Fit with friends

What's more fun than running and playing? Running and playing with friends! Encourage your teenager to be active and social with these ideas.

**Community events.** Your child could search online or on community bulletin boards for upcoming activities like a walk-a-thon or a 5K race. Then, he can choose one and invite friends to join him.

**Pickup games.** Your teen and a friend might meet new people by finding pickup soccer or basketball games at a nearby park or school.

**Fitness facilities.** Offer to take your tween and his friends to places where other kids do activities. Examples include a skateboard park, an indoor swimming pool, or an open gym. ●

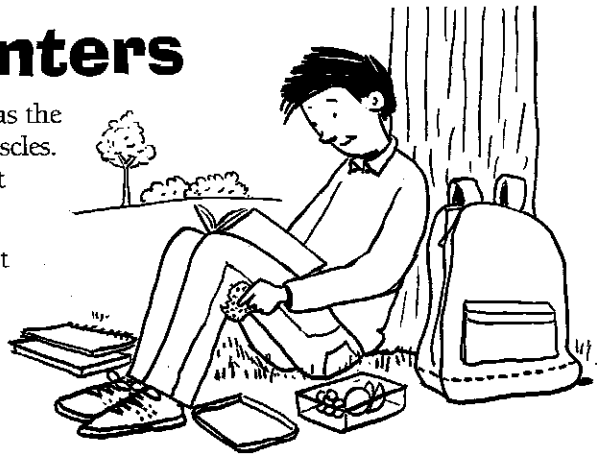


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# Protein pointers

Your child can think of protein as the building blocks for his bones and muscles. Here's how to help him get the right amount and choose different kinds.

**Know what you need.** Most kids get plenty of protein—and too much may keep them from eating enough from other food groups. Teen girls and boys ages 10–13 should have 5 “ounce-equivalents” of protein-rich foods a day, and teen boys ages 14–18 need 6½. Examples include



1 oz. lean meat or poultry, 1 oz. fish, 1 egg, ½ oz. nuts, 1 tbsp. peanut butter, and ¼ cup cooked beans.

**Wake up with protein.** Eating protein at breakfast can tide your tween over until lunch because he will feel fuller longer. He might enjoy oatmeal with whipped cottage cheese (blend nonfat cottage cheese until fluffy). Or he could spread peanut or almond butter on whole-wheat toast.

**Make your own protein pack.** For a satisfying snack, suggest that your teen fill a container with protein-packed foods. He might include a peeled hard-boiled egg and 2 tbsp. hummus. Encourage him to add a whole grain (pita, crackers) and fruit or vegetable (grapes, cucumbers). ●



## ACTIVITY CORNER

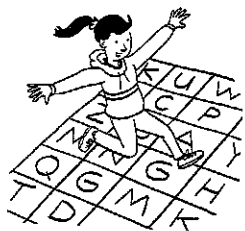
### Life-sized games

Super-sized games mean super-sized fun and physical activity for your tween. All she needs is a driveway or blacktop, sidewalk chalk, and a die.

● **Race to the finish.** Draw an S-shaped board game path and mark off spaces. Label a start and a finish. In each square, write an “active” direction like “Jump ahead 3 squares,” “Do 10 toe touches,” or “Run back to start.” Players roll a die, move the number of spaces indicated, and follow the instruction. The first player to finish wins.

● **Jump and spell.** Draw a 10 x 10 grid, and write a random letter in each square.

Take turns spelling the longest possible word by jumping from square to square. Keep track of your words. After five rounds, each player counts the total number of letters in her words—high number wins. ●



## Q & A

### Challenges of celiac disease

**Q:** My son has celiac disease. He doesn't want to be different, and he's trying to eat what his friends eat. What do you suggest?

**A:** As your child gets older, it's not surprising he doesn't want to stand out. It can be difficult for a teen to avoid pizza, pasta, bread, and other foods with gluten—the substance that people with celiac disease can't tolerate.

Explain that his friends will understand if he orders his pizza with a gluten-free crust or his burger without a bun. Ask, “How would you feel if a friend was lactose-intolerant and ordered pizza without cheese?” Your son will probably say he wouldn't care at all!

Next, point out that it's not worth feeling sick—and possibly damaging his health—just so he fits in. Finally, help him find a support group for teens with celiac disease. Knowing he's not alone can make a big difference. ●



## In the Kitchen

### Fish: The ultimate fast food!

Meals with fish come together quickly. Let your teen try these recipes, and she'll have dinner in a jiffy.

#### Avocado-lime tuna salad

Mash 1 avocado with the juice of half a lime. Toss in 2 cans or pouches of tuna (packed in water, drained), 2 tbsp. minced red onion, and black pepper to taste. Serve on whole-wheat buns with lettuce and tomato.

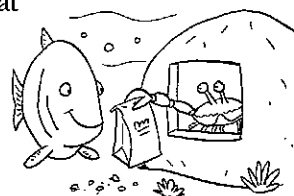
#### Baked cod tacos

Sprinkle 1 lb. cod fillets with 2 tbsp. taco

seasoning. Saute in a hot skillet in 1 tsp. canola oil until cooked through, about 3 minutes per side. Flake cod into warmed corn tortillas. Top with shredded red cabbage and pineapple salsa.

#### Sweet Dijon salmon

Stir together 1 tbsp. each Dijon mustard, honey, and apple cider vinegar. Place four 4-oz. salmon fillets on a baking sheet coated with nonstick cooking spray and coat with the sauce. Bake at 425° about 12 minutes, until fish flakes. ●



## OUR PURPOSE

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

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ISSN 1935-8865