

# Teen Food & Fitness

Healthy Ideas for Middle and High School Students

January 2012



## FAST TAKES

### Make-your-own chips

Homemade tortilla chips are healthier than store bought—and they're easy to make. Just slice tortillas into triangles with a pizza cutter or a knife. Then, spray a baking sheet with nonfat cooking oil, spread tortilla pieces across, and spray them lightly with the oil. Bake 15 minutes at 375°. Serve with salsa.



### Beyond the score

Winning games can make your tween or teen feel good. But you might also remind her that another reason to play is to have fun. After a game, ask her about her favorite moments instead of focusing on who won or lost. You'll send the message that there's more to playing sports than the score.

### Did You Know?

Sugar goes by many names. Ingredients ending in "ose" (fructose, lactose, maltose, and more), along with sweeteners like molasses, maple syrup, or fruit juice concentrate, are just other ways to say sugar. Suggest that your child look online for a list so he can recognize sugar by any name on food and drink ingredient lists.

### Just for fun

**Q:** What's a polar bear's favorite food?

**A:** Frozen yogurt!



Stonington Public Schools Nutrition Services  
Tim Paquette, Director of School Nutrition

## An active year

Adding exercise to your family's routine can help your kids stay active and show that you care about being active, too. Here are ideas for getting off on the right foot in 2012.

### Go for a "moving" night.

Thinking of going to the movies? Consider a more active family outing instead. You might try bowling or laser tag.

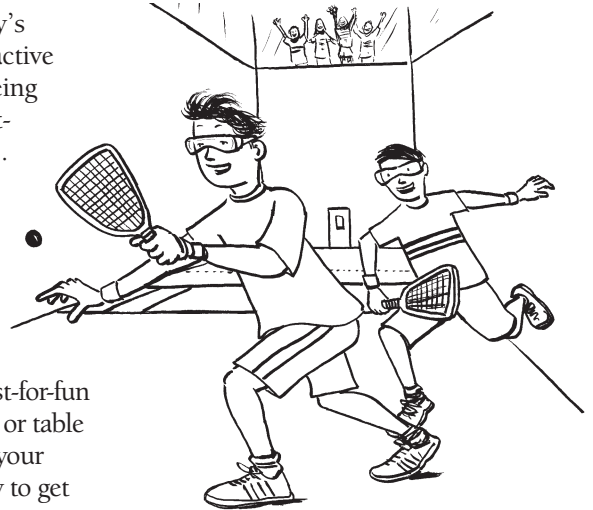
### Sign up for a family league.

Community centers often have just-for-fun leagues like racquetball, handball, or table tennis for adults and teens. See if your family can enter as a team, and try to get friends to sign up their families, too.

**Build exercise into game nights.** Set aside a regular night to play board games, and then make fitness part of the action. For example, do five jumping jacks every time your player is jumped in checkers. Or add cards to the Monopoly deck with options like get out of jail by doing 20 push-ups or advance to Boardwalk by doing 10 crunches.

### Form a sport-of-the-month club.

Encourage your teen to explore a new



sport by trying a different one as a family each month. You could learn to ice-skate or try out golf by hitting balls at a driving range.

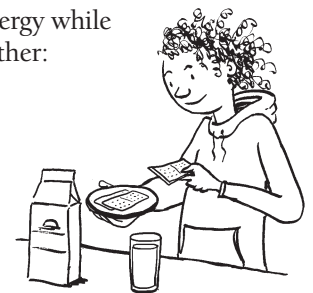
**Join a fitness center.** Become regulars at your community center's fitness room or open gym. Or look for a low-cost health club in your area. Gyms often have free trials or membership sales. *Tip:* See if your health insurance plan or employers offer health club discounts. ♥

## Pre-workout snacks

The right foods can help your teen keep up her energy while playing sports or working out. Review these tips together:

- The best choices are foods that combine carbohydrates (for quick energy) and protein (for long-term fuel). *Examples:* a baked potato with a thin layer of melted cheese, a pretzel stick wrapped with lean deli meat.
- Keep snacks small. Eating too much before a workout can literally weigh your teen down.
- Avoid high-fat foods. Chips and crackers might be convenient, but they can leave her feeling sluggish. *Idea:* Point out healthy, easy-to-grab options like low-fat string cheese or graham crackers with fat-free milk.

*Note:* Plan to finish snacks 30 minutes before an activity. ♥



# Keep a food diary

If your child is looking for ways to lose weight or to eat healthier, keeping a food diary might be the answer. Consider these steps.

**1. Write it down.** Suggest that she keep an honest record of what she eats and drinks. She should jot down each item, including the portion size and the time she has it. She might keep her diary in a small notebook, on a laptop, or in a smartphone app. *Tip:* Encourage her to make entries when she eats, rather than trying to remember it all at the end of the day.

**2. Note other factors.** Have her note her mood (happy, sad) and why she's eating (still hungry after dinner, restless while



studying). She could also note where she's eating (friend's house, in front of the TV). Looking at these factors can help her pinpoint trouble spots and find trends.

**3. Review regularly.** Your teen should review her eating habits at the end of each week. Suggest that she look for types of foods she's eating too much of (fast food) or not enough of (vegetables).

She can also pay attention to times of the day that she tends to skip meals or reach for cookies. Then, she can use that information to set goals and work on healthier eating habits.

*Idea:* Joining with a friend to keep and review food diaries could help them both stick to a better eating plan. ●

## Q & A A taste for lattes

**Q:** My son Mike likes to drink flavored lattes at coffee shops with his friends. I'm worried about the amount of caffeine he's drinking, plus the drinks are expensive. Any ideas?

**A:** You might start by letting your son know that a 16-ounce latte has a lot of caffeine (about 320 milligrams). Remind him that caffeine is a stimulant that can interfere with concentration and sleep. Also, the flavored lattes he likes probably have added sugar and fat.

While an occasional latte is okay, encourage him not to make it a habit. Suggest that he try non-caffeinated beverages like hot or iced herbal tea or bottled water. Then, he can still enjoy being with his friends at a coffee shop—while having healthier drinks *and* saving money. ●



## In the Kitchen

### Chicken dishes

Tired of the same old chicken dinners? Try these interesting, but easy, recipes.

**Slow-cooker spaghetti.** Cook 4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts, a 24-oz. jar of marinara sauce, and 3 tbsp. water in a crockpot on low for 6 hours. Serve over whole-wheat pasta, and top with shredded low-fat mozzarella cheese.

**Baked chicken tenders.** Crush 3 cups cornflakes (by hand or in a food processor). Dip 2 lb. small chicken pieces into the crumbs, and set on a large



baking sheet coated with cooking spray. Bake at 350° for 25 minutes.

**BBQ chicken sandwiches.** In a saucepan, bring 1½ cups thick barbecue sauce to medium-high heat. Shred a rotisserie chicken (or 3 cups leftover chicken) into the sauce. Serve on whole-grain hamburger buns. ●

## ACTIVITY CORNER

### Drive to the basket

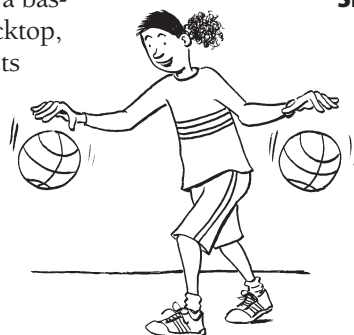
Whether your child is on a basketball team or just likes to shoot hoops, these drills can help her improve her skills—and get exercise!

**Dribbling.** Have her dribble a ball in each hand up and down a basketball court, school blacktop, or driveway. Once she gets faster, she can add cones so she has to zigzag around obstacles while dribbling both balls.

**Speed.** Let her set up three cones or other objects four feet apart

to form a line. She should stand about three feet away from the cones, run to the first one, then back, run to the second cone and back, and so on, up and down the line. She can try this first with running only, and then add dribbling a ball.

**Shooting.** This drill strengthens a teen's shooting arm. To begin, she should stand flat-footed four feet from a basket, to the side. With one hand, have her bounce the ball off the backboard (not into the basket). Repeat 15 times per side. ●



## 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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