

Snack Smart

For tweens and teens, being busy and on the go is a fact of life. Whether your child is studying, hanging out at a friend's house, or fueling up for basketball practice, he can make healthy snack choices with this advice.



Mix and match for energy

What's the recipe for snacks that will give your teen energy to focus in school and play hard on the field? The possibilities are endless, but they have this in common: They combine lean protein, whole grains, fruits and vegetables, or dairy.

Try this idea to help your child put together his own healthy snacks. Let him divide a sheet of paper into four columns and write one of those categories at the top of each. He might even make it into a spreadsheet! In each column, he can list his favorite foods. For instance, he may fill in chicken and peanut butter for lean protein, tortillas and pretzels for whole grains, peaches and broccoli for fruits and veggies, and yogurt and Swiss cheese for dairy.

Then, he could post his list or a printout of his spreadsheet on the refrigerator and use it to mix and match options. Help him come up with high-energy snacks like a whole-wheat tortilla wrap with turkey, cheese, and lettuce, or a mini whole-wheat bagel with cottage cheese and a tomato slice.

Shop on the edge



Eating healthy snacks begins with having the right foods on hand. Go grocery shopping together a few times to show your teen how to find healthy snack ingredients.

For starters, let her see that the most nutritious foods are usually around the edges of the store. Take a tour of the store's perimeter, and she'll see fruits, vegetables, dairy, meats, and whole grains (in the bakery). Of course, you don't want to ignore all the inside aisles—healthy whole grains like brown rice and quinoa and lean proteins like beans will be found

there. But shopping mainly around the edges means she won't be tempted to pick up packaged, processed snacks like cookies, chips, or frozen meals.

Pack wisely

Thinking ahead is always a good idea, and that's particularly true when it comes to snacking. Whether heading to school, band practice, or a family excursion, your teen can pack healthy snacks to take along. He'll be less tempted to pick up junk food from a convenience store or french fries at a fast-food place.

Make packing easy by getting reusable containers in different sizes, an insulated pouch, and ice packs. Then, encourage your child to take time on the weekend to pre-pack snacks so they're ready to go when he is. He might put together bags of air-popped popcorn or dried fruit, or he could pack whole-grain pasta salad or hard-boiled eggs in small containers.

Make the most of the cafeteria.

Have your tween take advantage of the healthy offerings in her school cafeteria. At lunch-time, she might get a double serving of carrot sticks or an extra apple to save for snacking between classes (if allowed) or before an after-school activity.



Team up with friends

Suggest that your tween and her friends take turns bringing nutritious snacks to share when they're hanging out. With "positive peer pressure," they'll be more likely to make good snack choices.

They might even channel their creativity and work together to become "mystery snack chefs." Each person can contribute a healthy ingredient from her kitchen—without saying in advance what she's bringing. Once they're together, they could figure out how to turn the ingredients into tasty snacks. Say one brings a bag of raw spinach, another brings coconut water, and a third brings a banana. They might create smoothies.

Or they could each bring a few nutritious ingredients and hold a competition. Who can cook up the most delicious treat?



Be choosy at the vending machine

For the teen rushing from school to a job or sports practice, vending machines can be a welcome option. Try to make sure they're a healthy option, too, by talking about how to make good decisions before pressing the button.

Lots of vending machines stock water these days. Be certain your child knows that water is always choice #1—healthier than soda, sports drinks, energy drinks, or even juice. When it comes to food, he can look for baked chips, unsalted nuts, fruit cups packed in juice, and whole-grain crackers.

If he's in doubt, suggest that he think about nutritious snacks you've made together at home or those he shopped for "around the perimeter."

Grab 'n' go snacks

We asked—and teens answered! Here are readers' favorite on the go snacks.

Hummus mix-ins

Your child can find pretty much any flavor of hummus at the grocery store, but why not customize her own by stirring in interesting ingredients? Keep plain hummus in your fridge. Then, your child might add black beans (canned, rinsed) and jalapenos or diced cucumbers and tomatoes. She could scoop the hummus into mini whole-grain pita pockets for a handheld treat.

Avocado rice cake

This portable version of guacamole lets your teen skip the chips—and reap the benefits of avocados' "good" fat. Scoop out $\frac{1}{2}$ of a ripe avocado, and sprinkle with a little salt, pepper, and lime or lemon juice. Mash, spread on a brown-rice cake, and dust with red pepper flakes.

Yogurt bark

For a kid-friendly cold snack, make this in advance and store in the freezer. Spread 2 cups vanilla Greek yogurt on a clean sheet pan lined with parchment



paper. Top with bits of dried apricot, blueberries, and halved grapes. Freeze for 4 hours or until firm. Break the bark apart, and pack in an insulated snack bag.

Editor's Note: Teen Food & Fitness™ is reviewed by a registered dietitian. Consult a physician before beginning any major change in diet or exercise.

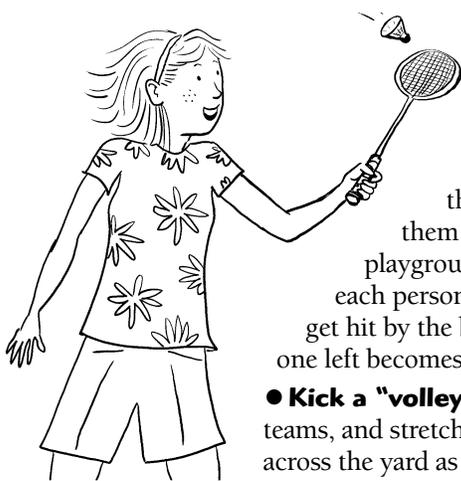
Step Up Your Activity

Inspire your family to lead an active lifestyle with the simple ideas in this guide. You'll find everyday suggestions that will help children and parents build strong muscles, increase fitness, and maintain a healthy weight—not to mention have fun together!



Play outside

Join your tween or teen in the backyard for old standbys like badminton, catch, and touch football. Or consider one of these twists on classic favorites.



● **Have a dodgeball free-for-all.** Choose one person to be the thrower. The other players are targets. As everyone runs around, the thrower chases after them and gently tosses a soft playground ball, trying to tag each person with the ball. If you get hit by the ball, you're out. The last one left becomes the next thrower.

● **Kick a "volleyball."** Divide into two teams, and stretch a garden hose or a rope across the yard as a "net." Play like regular volleyball, with two differences: Use a

beach ball instead of a volleyball, and have players use only their feet to "bump" the ball back and forth. Teams score a point each time the ball lands on their opponent's side. The first team to reach 15 points wins.

● **Tag the treasure.** One player is "It." The rest are "smugglers" who want to keep It from capturing the "loot"—an object that can be hidden in a closed fist, such as a checker. One smuggler carries the loot while the others pretend to have it. At any time, the smuggler with the loot may sneak it to another smuggler. When It tags someone, that person must stop and show whether she has the treasure. The game ends when It catches the person with the loot.

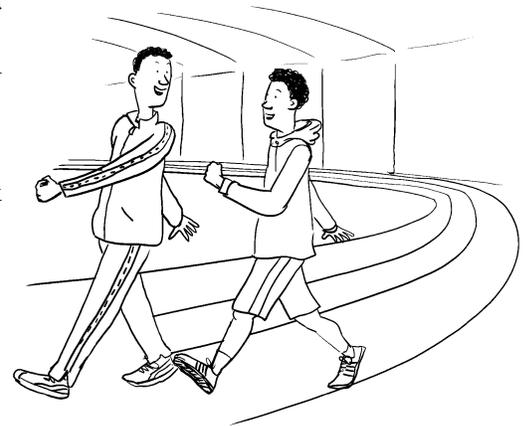
Step to it

Walking tones muscles, strengthens the heart and lungs, and requires no special equipment beyond a pair of comfortable sneakers. Use these strategies to add more steps to your daily routines.

● **Train for a cause.** Ask your teen to find a charity walk, and sign up together. Then, let him create a training schedule for your family. You might build endurance by starting with a half-mile walk the first week and adding another half mile each week until you can go the entire distance.

● **Shape up while shopping.** Instead of parking near the entrance, park far away. Before doing your errands, take a lap or two (or three!) around the mall or shopping strip, keeping up a good pace the whole way. Then, take the stairs rather than the escalator.

● **Reconnect on the move.** Need to have a family meeting? Want to discuss your weekend plans? Take it outside! Map a route through your neighborhood, perhaps 1 mile or 3 miles, to walk while you chat. Or schedule weekly "walk and talk" dates, and take turns choosing places to go. Your tween might suggest walking around a nearby lake. On a rainy day, try an indoor track at a local college or community center.



Move around town

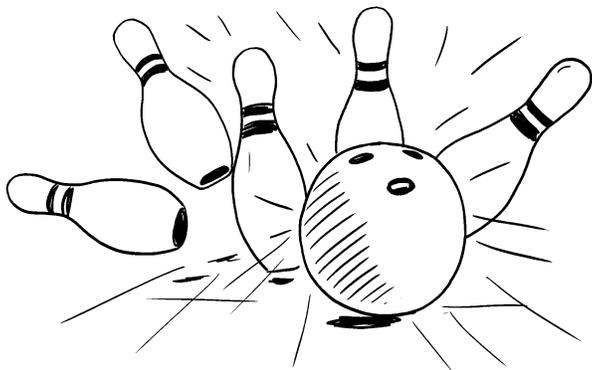
Together, brainstorm interesting activities that involve getting out and moving. Here are a few to get you started.

● **Join a volunteer project.** Check with local groups for active ways to pitch in. For instance, help plant a community garden, walk dogs at an animal shelter, or build homes for the needy.



● **Take field trips.** Pretend that you're tourists from out of town, and see what your town's visitor center suggests. Then, give each family member a turn planning weekend adventures. You might go on a bird-watching hike in a state park or try your skill at a rock-climbing gym.

● **Find a team.** There's a community team for just about every sport imaginable. Pick one or two that fit your family's interests, and sign up. Perhaps you will bowl together in a league or play doubles tennis. *Idea:* If your family enjoys a particular sport, you could work together as coaches and mentors for a team of younger kids. Check with your rec center, the YMCA, or Boys & Girls Clubs for opportunities.



Get fit while you sit

Family members can slip in cardio exercise while sitting at a desk, whether studying or paying bills. Share these heart-boosting ideas.

● **Do seated jumping jacks.** With your feet spread apart, pop up from the seat, clap your hands overhead like you would for a regular jumping jack, and sit back down. Do three sets of 15 repetitions. *Idea:* Swap out the desk chair for an exercise ball, and bounce on the ball for your jumping jacks instead.

● **Ride an invisible bicycle.** Sit toward the front of the seat, and lean back so your shoulder blades touch the back of the chair. Lift your feet off the floor, and "pedal" your legs by alternately pulling one knee toward your chest while keeping the other leg straight. Work up to pedaling rapidly for 30 seconds. *Tip:* Hold on to the seat or arms of the chair to help keep your balance.



● **Try shadowboxing.** Sit up straight on the edge of the chair. While bouncing your toes from side to side on the floor, raise your fists in front of your face, and move them around each other in 10 tight circles as if you're a boxer hitting a speed bag. Without stopping, twist to the right and do 10 more circles with your fists. Then, twist to the left, and repeat.

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