

10 tips

Nutrition Education Series



eat smart and be active as you grow



10 healthy tips for teen girls

Young girls, ages 10 to 19, have a lot of changes going on in their bodies. Building healthier habits will help you—now as a growing teen—and later in life. Growing up means you are in charge of foods you eat and the time you spend being physically active every day.

1 build strong bones

A good diet and regular physical activity can build strong bones throughout your life. Choose fat-free or low-fat milk, cheeses, and yogurt to get the vitamin D and calcium your growing bones need. Strengthen your bones three times a week doing activities such as running, gymnastics, and skating.



2 cut back on sweets

Cut back on sugary drinks. Many 12-ounce cans of soda have 10 teaspoons of sugar in them. Drink water when you are thirsty. Sipping water and cutting back on cakes, candies, and sweets helps to maintain a healthy weight.

3 power up with whole grain

Fuel your body with nutrient-packed whole-grain foods. Make sure that at least half your grain foods are whole grains such as brown rice, whole-wheat breads, and popcorn.



4 choose vegetables rich in color

Brighten your plate with vegetables that are red, orange, or dark green. Try acorn squash, cherry tomatoes, or sweet potatoes. Spinach and beans also provide vitamins like folate and minerals like potassium that are essential for healthy growth.



5 check Nutrition Facts labels for iron

Read Nutrition Facts labels to find foods containing iron. Most protein foods like meat, poultry, eggs, and beans have iron, and so do fortified breakfast cereals and breads.

6 be a healthy role model

Encourage your friends to practice healthier habits. Share what you do to work through challenges. Keep your computer and TV time to less than 2 hours a day (unless it's school work).

7 try something new

Keep healthy eating fun by picking out new foods you've never tried before like lentils, mango, quinoa, or kale.

8 make moving part of every event

Being active makes everyone feel good. Aim for 60 minutes of physical activity each day. Move your body often. Dancing, playing active games, walking to school with friends, swimming, and biking are only a few fun ways to be active. Also, try activities that target the muscles in your arms and legs.



9 include all food groups daily

Use MyPlate as your guide to include all food groups each day. Learn more at www.ChooseMyPlate.gov.

10 everyone has different needs

Get nutrition information based on your age, gender, height, weight, and physical activity level. Use SuperTracker to find your calorie level, choose the foods you need, and track progress toward your goals. Learn more at www.SuperTracker.usda.gov.

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choose the foods you need to grow



10 tips for teen guys

Feed your growing body by making better food choices today as a teen and as you continue to grow into your twenties. Make time to be physically active every day to help you be fit and healthy as you grow.

1 get over the idea of magic foods

There are no magic foods to eat for good health. Teen guys need to eat foods such as vegetables, fruits, whole grains, protein foods, and fat-free or low-fat dairy foods. Choose protein foods like unsalted nuts, beans, lean meats, and fish. SuperTracker.usda.gov will show if you are getting the nutrients you need for growth.



2 always hungry?

Whole grains that provide fiber can give you a feeling of fullness and provide key nutrients. Choose half your grains as whole grains. Eat whole-wheat breads, pasta, and brown rice instead of white bread, rice, or other refined grains. Also, choose vegetables and fruits when you need to “fill-up.”

6 skip foods that can add unwanted pounds

Cut back on calories by limiting fatty meats like ribs, bacon, and hot dogs. Some foods are just occasional treats like pizza, cakes, cookies, candies, and ice cream. Check out the calorie content of sugary drinks by reading the Nutrition Facts label. Many 12-ounce sodas contain 10 teaspoons of sugar.

7 learn how much food you need

Teen guys may need more food than most adults, teen girls, and little kids. Go to www.SuperTracker.usda.gov. It shows how much food you need based on your age, height, weight, and activity level. It also tracks progress towards fitness goals.



3 keep water handy

Water is a better option than many other drink choices. Keep a water bottle in your backpack and at your desk to satisfy your thirst. Skip soda, fruit drinks, and energy and sports drinks. They are sugar-sweetened and have few nutrients.



4 make a list of favorite foods

Like green apples more than red apples? Ask your family food shopper to buy quick-to-eat foods for the fridge like mini-carrots, apples, oranges, low-fat cheese slices, or yogurt. And also try dried fruit; unsalted nuts; whole-grain breads, cereal, and crackers; and popcorn.

8 check Nutrition Facts labels

To grow, your body needs vitamins and minerals. Calcium and vitamin D are especially important for your growing bones. Read Nutrition Facts labels for calcium. Dairy foods provide the minerals your bones need to grow.

9 strengthen your muscles

Work on strengthening and aerobic activities. Work out at least 10 minutes at a time to see a better you. However, you need to get at least 60 minutes of physical activity every day.



5 start cooking often

Get over being hungry by fixing your own snacks and meals. Learn to make vegetable omelets, bean quesadillas, or a batch of spaghetti. Prepare your own food so you can make healthier meals and snacks. Microwaving frozen pizzas doesn't count as home cooking.



10 fill your plate like MyPlate

Go to www.ChooseMyPlate.gov for more easy tips and science-based nutrition from the Dietary Guidelines for Americans (www.DietaryGuidelines.gov).