

Teen Health Kit for Parents

✓ Helping Your Teen Eat a Balanced Diet and Get Plenty of Exercise

Obesity and overweight are growing national health concerns. In fact, more children than ever before are suffering from obesity, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Overweight teens are at high risk for developing serious health conditions such as Type 2 diabetes and heart disease. It can be a battle to get teens to replace their snack food and sodas with nutritional food choices, as well as get them to walk away from computer games and TV programs. But, their health now and in the future depends on a balanced diet and exercise. Here are some tips to help your teen eat well and exercise:

1. Provide nutritional, well-balanced, high-fiber meals that are rich in whole grains, fresh fruits and vegetables. Teens should consume at least three servings per day of foods rich in calcium, such as dairy products (low-fat milk, cheese and yogurt), fortified orange juice and soy milk.
2. Make it easy. Keep nutritional snacks, like cut-up fruit, pretzels, cheese sticks, low-fat yogurt and butter-free popcorn, on hand.
3. Nix the soft drinks. Don't even keep them in the house.
4. Challenge your teen to seek out healthier alternatives to typical fast food. If they must grab food on the run, suggest choosing salads, broiled chicken or other lower fat offerings.
5. Put your teen in charge of some of the family's meals and grocery shopping so he learns how to buy, prepare and enjoy healthful and nutritious meals.
6. Be a role model for healthy eating and fitness.
7. Limit television viewing and don't eat in front of the TV.
8. Encourage regular physical activity. Plan family outings, such as swimming and hiking. Play sports together.
9. Encourage your teen to try new physical activities. Yoga, biking, rock climbing, hiking, skiing or snowboarding can help build confidence, fitness and skills.
10. Help your teen recognize that body images portrayed in the media are unrealistic and unreachable for most people.

Sources: American Medical Association, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the U.S. Department of Agriculture

Useful Web sites:

American Academy of Pediatrics
www.aap.org

www.healthierus.gov

Local Resources:

Genesee Valley Health Partnership, Inc.
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