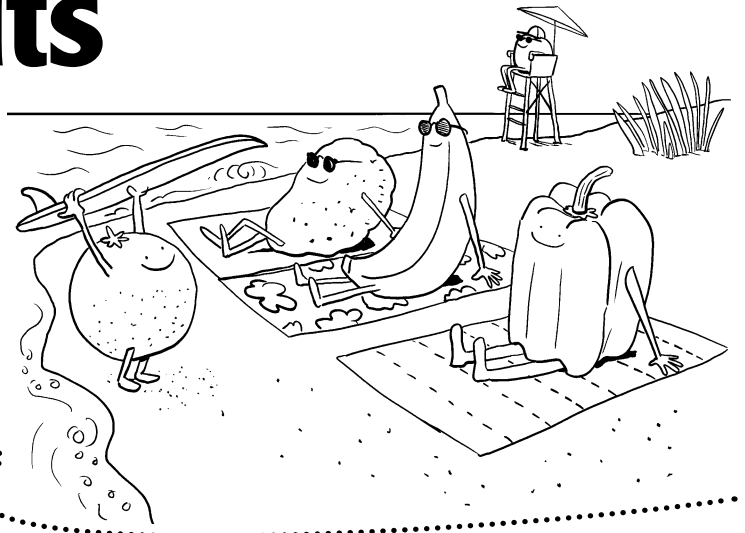


Eat Your Fruits and Veggies

Teens and tweens need plenty of fruits and vegetables every day to stay healthy and strong. This guide contains advice for making produce a priority, starting the day with fruits and veggies, getting a variety of nutrients, and being creative with healthy foods.



Make it half!

When it comes to produce, have your child think “half”: The goal is for half of each meal (or snack) to be fruits and vegetables. Here’s how.

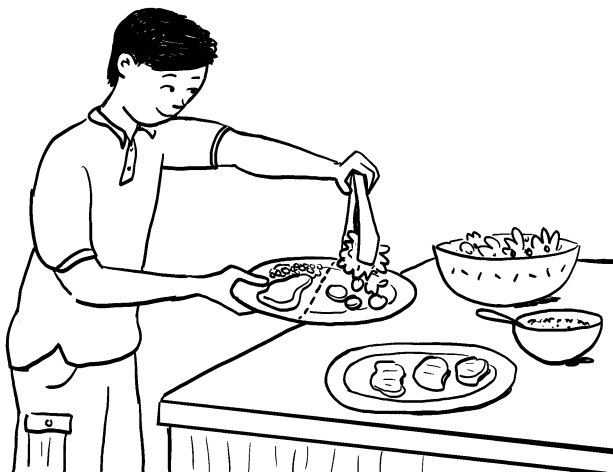


Plate it right. At mealtime, encourage your tween to imagine an invisible line down the middle of his plate. He can put protein and whole grains on one half and load up the other half with fruits and vegetables.

Pile it on sandwiches. Half of your teen’s sandwich can be made of fruits or veggies. Let him layer pineapple slices with lean ham on whole-wheat bread. Or he might spread hummus (chickpeas count as a protein *and* a veggie!) on bread and add cucumbers and turkey. *Idea:* For even more produce, wrap sandwich ingredients in lettuce instead of using bread.

Go “halfies” at snack time. Suggest that your tween prepare snacks with the half-produce principle in mind, too. Ask him to pick a fruit or vegetable and think, “What would taste good with that?” For instance, he could eat a clementine with whole-wheat pretzel sticks or raw snap peas with string cheese.

Invite produce to breakfast

Cereal, milk, fruit, and...broccoli? Why not! Vegetables are often the forgotten food group when it comes to breakfast. But morning is the perfect time for your teen to get a jump start on enjoying her veggies for the day. Try these options.

Oatmeal. Here’s a version inspired by carrot cake. For each serving, stir $\frac{1}{2}$ cup plain uncooked oats, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup shredded carrots, $\frac{3}{4}$ cup nonfat milk, 1 tbsp. raisins, $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. cinnamon, and 1 tsp. maple syrup in a jar. Refrigerate overnight, and microwave in the morning.

Salads. Toss raw spinach with cooked sweet potato chunks. Top each serving with a fried or hard-boiled egg.



Bagels. Cut a whole-wheat bagel in half, top halves with low-fat cheddar cheese and tomato slices, and broil until cheese melts.

Tacos. Fill tortillas (corn or whole wheat) with cooked turkey sausage, salsa, avocado pieces, and shredded low-fat Monterey Jack cheese.

Eggs. Dice last night’s leftover veggies, such as broccoli, asparagus, and zucchini. Scramble eggs in a skillet. Just before the eggs set, stir in vegetables, and scramble until warmed through.

Hash browns. Cook frozen shredded potatoes according to package directions. Add sliced mushrooms and diced peppers and onions, and cook until tender.



Eat a rainbow

Your tween doesn't need rain and sun to make a rainbow! Motivate her to eat a variety of fruits and vegetables with these clever ideas.

Fruit salad kebabs. Have your child cut different-colored fruit into thick chunks. Then, she can thread them onto skewers in a rainbow pattern for a colorful finger food.

Food art. Suggest that your teen make a rainbow veggie platter for a family meal or a party. She could create arcs of the rainbow with grape tomatoes, yellow bell pepper spears, carrot sticks, green beans, and wedges of purple cabbage.

Colorful meal. Challenge your tween to plan a meal with as many colors as she can find in your fridge or pantry. Maybe she'll decide on an arugula salad with radish slices, grilled chicken topped with mango salsa, and blueberries and orange segments for dessert.

Be creative

Get your child in the kitchen to explore different textures and ways of serving fruits and vegetables. Foods he wouldn't eat before may become his new favorites. Consider these suggestions.



Puree it. Puree fruits and vegetables in a blender or food processor. For example, your tween could blend fresh or frozen peaches with a splash of vanilla extract to make a fruity topping for pancakes or waffles. For macaroni and cheese, replace up to half of the cheese sauce with pureed, cooked butter-nut squash.

Noodle it. Suggest that your teen swap zucchini noodles for pasta and top with tomato sauce. Or he might try carrot noodles in place of lo mein noodles in a vegetable and tofu stir-fry.

Stuff it. A vegetable can be an edible bowl! Scoop out the insides of a tomato, and fill with a healthy tuna salad: Combine canned or pouch tuna (packed in water) with light mayonnaise and chopped celery. Or stuff peppers (insides removed) with cooked brown rice, black beans, salsa, and shredded low-fat cheddar cheese. Bake at 350° until heated through and cheese is golden brown.

Freeze it. Use a melon baller to create fresh fruit balls from cantaloupe or honeydew melon. Seal in a freezer bag, and freeze. Your teen can use the frozen fruit balls as "ice" to keep water cold—and flavored—and then eat the fruit. Or cut a peeled kiwi or apple into thick slices and push a lollipop stick in halfway. He could dip each piece in melted dark chocolate. Freeze in a single layer on a sheet pan for fruity chocolate pops.

Roast it. Vegetables take on a sweet flavor when roasted in the oven. Toss brussels sprouts or cauliflower with olive oil (about ½ tsp. per cup of veggies), salt, and pepper. Place in a single layer on a baking sheet, and cook at 400° for about 30 minutes or until tender.



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