

Tips for Healthy Habits for Teens

EATING RIGHT

Aim for a breakfast that includes three of the five main food groups. Try eggs + whole grain toast + mild. Or how about peanut butter + apple + cereal? Orange juice + lunchmeat + cheese?

Choose whole grain bread for your toast in the morning. A bowl of warm oatmeal is another good whole grain option.

Switch to 1% or skim milk. Buy low-fat, low-sugar yogurt (light yogurt) and cheese. If your body can't handle dairy, try fortified soymilk.

If you like cold cereals, stick to brands that have little or no added sugar, have at least 3 grams of fiber per serving, and have a whole grain first on the list of ingredients. Top off your cereal with fruits.

If you're in a hurry to get to school or work, take breakfast with you. Fresh fruit, light yogurt, a whole grain bagel, a hard-boiled egg, and a piece of leftover pizza – these all fit in a backpack, purse, or cargo-pant pocket.

LIMIT SCREEN TIME

Take the TV, computer, and game consoles out of all bedrooms.

Make it a family rule that minutes of TV watching must equal minutes of physical activity. Want to watch that sitcom? First, go for a 30-minute walk. Looking forward to that weekly drama? Play outside for an hour, then kick back on that couch.

TV can be habit-forming. To keep from overdoing it, make a few house rules. Say “Don't watch TV on weekdays,” or “No more than an hour each night – after homework.” Set whatever limits work for you. The important thing is to have some limits, and stick to them.

One way to help limit your screen time is to use a timer. When the timer goes off, your screen time is up, no exceptions!

Decide in advance what programs you want to watch during the week. Turn the TV on **ONLY** when the show is on, and turn it off when the show is over.

EXERCISE

Try to make 20-30 minutes of your daily activity rigorous and aerobic. Get your heart beating faster, and work up a sweat.

Add strength training two to three times a week.

Use your own body weight – do push-ups, pull-ups, sit-ups, and knee bends.

Sign up for personal training or work with a coach to learn good techniques.

Try light weight (or even soup cans) and lots of repetitions. Teens and kids shouldn't use heavy weights unless a coach or other trained professional can help lift them safely.

You don't need to be a sports star. Pick up a game with friends and family.

Check out options at your local parks and recreation center or at a health club or school.