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Nutrition for Your Teen: Ages 13 through 18 Years

The teenage years involve big, sometimes rapid, changes developmentally that prepare teens for adulthood and independent living. Although it may seem otherwise, parents still serve as important role models and sources of guidance, support and encouragement in helping teens establish healthy habits.

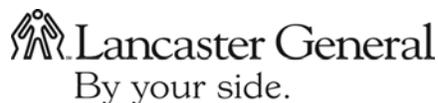
Nutritional needs:

Teens ages 13 through 18 years old vary widely in their calorie needs, depending on age, gender, and physical activity level:

- *Female needs range from 1600-2200 calories (13 year olds) to 1800-2400 calories (18 year olds).*
- *Male needs range from 2000-2600 calories (13 year olds) to 2400-3200 calories (18 year olds).*

The **guidelines below** list the types and amounts of foods that provide for *the minimum needs of teens*: Females, at least 1600-1800 calories; Males, at least 2000-2400 calories. oz.* = ounces

Food Group	Daily Goal	Tip
Grains:	<i>Females:</i> 5-to-6 oz.* equivalents <i>Males:</i> 6-to-8 oz. equivalents (1 oz. equivalent = 1 slice bread, ½ cup cooked cereal, rice, pasta, ¾ to 1 cup ready-to-eat low sugar cereal)	Choose whole grains half the time Examples: whole wheat bread, whole grain pasta, brown rice, oatmeal, whole grain barley, whole grain wheat flakes cereal
Vegetables	<i>Females:</i> 2 to 2-½ cups <i>Males:</i> 2-½ to 3 cups (2 cups raw leafy greens counts as 1 cup)	Choose a variety of colors and types of vegetables daily
Fruits	<i>Females:</i> 1-½ to 2 cups <i>Males:</i> 2 cups (1/2 cup dried fruit = 1 cup fruit)	Make most choices fruit, not juice, preferably unsweetened
Milk	<i>Females and Males:</i> 3 cups (1 cup yogurt or 1-½ oz cheese = 1 cup milk)	Choose fat free or low fat, calcium-rich types most often
Meats & Beans	<i>Females:</i> 5 oz. equivalents <i>Males:</i> 5.5 to 6.5 oz. equivalents (1 oz. equivalent = 1 oz. cooked fish, seafood, skinless poultry, lean beef, pork; 1 egg; 1 Tbsp. peanut butter or other nut butters; ¼ c. cooked dried beans)	Eat a variety of choices each week; aim for 2 fish/seafood meals for healthy omega-3 fatty acids
Oils	<i>Females:</i> 5 teaspoons <i>Males:</i> 6 to 7 teaspoons	Best sources: fatty fish, nuts, seeds, cooking oil (like canola and olive)
Extra calories	<i>Females:</i> 130-195 calories <i>Males:</i> 270-360 calories	Best sources: extra milk, vegetables, fruits; limit added sugars and fats
Water		Preferred over sweetened drinks



Tips for helping your teen eat healthy:

- Continue to maintain a “Division of Responsibility” in regard to feeding, but realize that as teens mature, they need to learn to take on more responsibility for *what to eat*.²
 - Parents are responsible for *what* foods and beverages are brought into the home, what foods are on- or off-limits for snacks, and what foods are served for family meals.
 - Teens are responsible for *whether* to eat and *how much* to eat. They can decide what to eat for snacks and for meals outside the home (like at school or at a friend’s home).
- At home, limit eating in rooms of the house other than the kitchen and dining room.
- Have family meals and keep mealtimes pleasant. Turn off the TV so you can enjoy being together. Talk. Model polite table manners.
- Invite your teen to help you plan menus, grocery shop, choose new foods, find healthy recipes, cook, and clean-up after meals.
- Encourage your teen to make his own snacks and meals, like breakfast. Ask him to plan some family meals, perhaps even ones with a theme (holiday, international cuisine, sports, favorite book or subject, etc)
- Help your teen start her day with a healthy breakfast which includes foods from at least 3 main food groups. Together, create and post a list of breakfast ideas as a handy reference. Do the same for snacks and packed lunch ideas. If your teen needs an energy boost for after school sports activities, remind her to pack a nonperishable snack, like homemade trail mix and water bottle.
- Keep plenty of calcium-rich foods and beverages on hand; encourage your teen to aim for *at least* “3 a day,” that is, 3 servings a day of dairy or other calcium-rich foods to meet their needs:
 - 13-19 year olds need 1300 mg calcium and *200 IU Vitamin D (*if limited sun exposure) daily. Good calcium sources: dairy foods (choose low fat or fat free types most often: milk, yogurt, cheese); *calcium-fortified* soymilk, orange juice, cereal, and tofu; salmon canned with bones (mash and eat for the calcium), sardines, collard greens, kale, bok choy, broccoli, soybeans, oranges
- Encourage iron-rich foods to meet the increased needs for menstruating females (to replace iron loss in blood) and for males (as their muscle mass develops). Good iron sources: beef and pork (choose lean cuts: round and loin), shellfish, skinless poultry, fish, iron-fortified cereals and breads, tofu, legumes, dried fruits, dark green vegetables. Vitamin C (found in many fruits and vegetables) enhances the absorption of iron from plant food sources.
- Watch for signs of an eating disorder: extreme concern or fear about body weight and shape, refusal to eat, excessive exercising, laxative abuse, bingeing (out of control eating), vomiting after meals. If you have any concerns about your teen, seek professional help.
- Be a positive role model. If you eat and enjoy a well-balanced diet, try new foods, use polite table manners, and practice healthy eating habits, chances are that your teen will do the same.
- Advocate for healthy foods served at school and extracurricular activities and sold for fundraisers.

References and resources:

1. MyPyramid: www.mypyramid.gov. Other government-sponsored nutrition information: www.nutrition.gov
2. KidsHealth Web site: www.KidsHealth.org
3. Fruits and Veggies More Matter™ National Campaign Web sites: www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org and www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov
4. 3 A Day™ of Dairy program Web site: www.3aday.org
5. Pennsylvania Advocates for Nutrition and Activity (PANA) Web site: www.panaonline.org