

KID'S Corner

Teens have a lot on their minds. Between school, sports, friends and text messages, teens and tweens have little time for eating the right foods. It is common for teens to skip breakfast, grab chips and soda from the vending machine, or grab a giant sugary latte after school with friends. These poor choices can take a toll on the health and wellness of today's teens.

Because of their poor diet choices, teens are at risk for becoming deficient in some essential nutrients. Calcium is a nutrient that is lacking in many teen's diets. Teens need around 1300 mg of calcium each day, which is the equivalent of around four cups of milk or yogurt. Teens can also be at risk for becoming deficient in iron, especially teen girls. Good sources of iron include meats, dark green leafy vegetables, and dried fruit.

Another concern regarding the diet of today's teens is the increasing rates of obesity in children and teens. According to the CDC, in the past 30 years, the



WHY NUTRITION IS IMPORTANT

by Sarah Muntel, RD

obesity rate in teens ages 12-19 tripled. In 1980, 5 percent of the teen population was affected by childhood obesity. This number increased to 18 percent in 2010. With these frightening statistics, it's time to take a look at teens' diets. The habits and choices that start in the teenage years can carry over into adulthood. By making changes to kid's diets early on, a lifetime of good habits can form.

"ACCORDING TO THE CDC, IN THE PAST 30 YEARS, THE OBESITY RATE IN TEENS AGES 12-19 TRIPLED."

HAVE YOUR TEEN TAKE THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONNAIRE WITH YOU TO SEE HOW THEY EAT EVERY DAY:

YES **NO** **DO YOU EAT THREE MEALS PER DAY?**

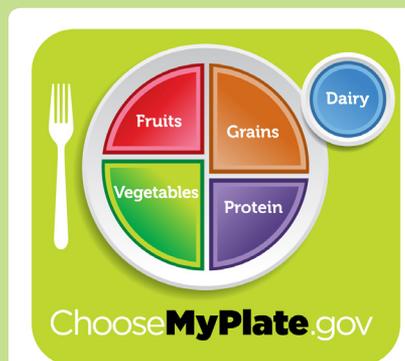
Three meals per day are three opportunities to get in good nutrition. When teens skip meals they miss out on these nutrients. Also, as teens skip meals, they typically end up getting overly hungry later and grab high calorie snack foods.

IF YOU SAID NO...

Try to have quick meal options available that are ready to go. Breakfast is frequently skipped, so fill your fridge with low-fat string cheese, fresh fruit, and boiled eggs. Chop-up fresh veggies and toppings for your teen to make a quick salad for a quick dinner before practice. Don't forget to top it with protein such as chicken, cheese or eggs!

YES **NO** **DO YOU CHOOSE A VARIETY OF FRUITS AND VEGETABLES AT MEALS?**

Teens' diets can be filled with high calorie processed foods, and many lack fresh vegetables and fruit. Skipping these foods can cause your diet to lack vitamins, minerals and fiber! A quick way to determine how much you need is by filling half of your plate with fruit or vegetables for each meal. This "Choose My Plate" model (*pictured left*) is developed by the USDA and is very easy to remember.



IF YOU SAID NO...

There are many fruits and vegetables that can be added to your teen's diet. Add diced vegetables to an omelet, top sandwiches with fresh veggies, mix yogurt and fruit together, make a fruit smoothie, or make a tasty dip for a fruit or vegetable.

YES

NO

DO YOU MOSTLY DRINK WATER?

High calorie sodas and drinks add up so quickly. Frozen drinks and milkshakes can add more than 500 calories at a time. Other juices, flavored drinks and sodas also add many extra calories. Water is always the best choice to stay hydrated. Aim for 8 glasses a day, more if you are exercising.

IF YOU SAID NO...

Offer water at meals and snacks. Flavor it with a slice of fresh lemon, lime or even cucumber to add variety.

YES

NO

DO YOU HAVE A DIET FULL OF LOW-FAT DAIRY FOODS, SUCH AS MILK, YOGURT, AND CHEESE?

Teens need 1,300 mg of calcium every day. This can be tough to meet for some teens. An 8 oz. glass of milk, yogurt or a serving of cheese all have around 300 mg of calcium. Calcium is very important in the teen years as strong bones are forming.

IF YOU SAID NO...

Begin adding calcium to your diet in fun ways. Serve smoothies for snacks. Melt low-fat cheese on eggs or sandwiches or top yogurt with granola for a healthy snack.

YES

NO

DO YOU CHOOSE WHOLE GRAINS?

It's time to replace white pasta, white bread and white rice with healthy whole grains full of fiber and great nutrition.

IF YOU SAID NO...

Begin swapping your white flour products for whole grains. These complex carbohydrates are full of fiber, vitamins and minerals and are nutritionally superior to white flour products. Make the switch today!

YES

NO

DO YOU CHOOSE IRON-RICH FOODS?

Teenage boys need approximately 11 mg of iron daily and teenage girls need approximately 15 mg. Foods high in iron include red meats, egg yolks, dark green leafy vegetables, and enriched cereals. Taking an iron-rich food with a food high in Vitamin C can increase absorption. For example, have a bowl of raisin bran with a glass of juice in the morning!

IF YOU SAID NO...

It's not too late; begin adding iron-rich foods today.

YES

NO

ARE YOU ACTIVE MOST DAYS?

Balancing healthy nutrition with movement can promote a healthy weight and can start teens on the road for lifetime wellness. It's also a great way to reduce stress in your teen's life.

IF YOU SAID NO...

Find activities your teen may enjoy. Join an intramural sport or activity. Make it a family affair. Take a family bike ride or walk and get healthy together.

MOTIVATION IS KEY

Now you know what to eat, how do you lead your teen in the right direction? Below, you will find some ways to motivate your teen:

LEAD BY EXAMPLE

You'll be amazed with what happens when you start leading the way. Your whole family can begin eating healthy together.

MODIFY SOME OF THEIR FAVORITE "JUNK FOODS"

Talk with your teen about their favorite foods and find ways to make them healthier. For example, make healthy chicken nuggets by dipping chicken in egg and coating in a high-fiber cereal or make a frozen coffee drink with skim milk and low-sugar syrup.

TALK ABOUT MAKING THE BEST CHOICE

You're not going to be with your teen all the time. Educate your teen on good choices to make on their own. You can make it fun. Find different places they typically go and find the best choice. Teens will eat fast food but knowing the grilled chicken sandwich is the best choice is a good start. Discuss movie theatre choices and show them how many calories are added when you put butter on your popcorn. Teens will be amazed!

PRACTICE MODERATION

Not every day is perfect, so if you have a day where you eat high-calorie, high-fat options, balance it out by choosing healthy options the next meal. No one is perfect and no one has a perfect diet. Everyone will splurge once in a while; just make sure your diet is balanced most of the time.

GET MOVING TOGETHER

Family bike rides, a walk with mom or a hike in the woods are great ways to increase your activity.

CONCLUSION

The teenage years are a great time to begin a lifetime of healthy habits. Start slowly by making a few changes at a time. You'll be amazed how quickly you'll see progress!

About the Author:

Sarah Muntel, RD, is the bariatric coordinator with Community Health Network in Indianapolis. She has worked in the field of bariatrics for the past 15 years and enjoys helping people get to a healthy weight so they can improve their health, feel better about themselves and become more active.



ABOUT THE OBESITY ACTION COALITION (OAC)

The Obesity Action Coalition (OAC) is a National non-profit organization dedicated to giving a voice to individuals affected by obesity and helping them along their journey toward better health. Our core focuses are to elevate the conversation of weight and its impact on health, improve access to obesity care, provide science-based education on obesity and its treatments, and fight to eliminate weight bias and discrimination.



VIBRANT COMMUNITY



NATIONAL AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS



ANNUAL CONVENTION



ADVOCACY



PUBLIC EDUCATION

LEARN, CONNECT, ENGAGE

The OAC knows that the journey with weight can be challenging but we also know that great things happen when we learn, connect and engage. That is why the OAC Community exists. Our Community is designed to provide quality education, ongoing support programs, an opportunity to connect, and a place to take action on important issues.

Through the OAC Community, you can get access to:

- Weight & Health Education • Community Blogs
 - Community Discussion Forum
 - Ongoing Support • Meaningful Connections
- AND MUCH MORE**



JOIN TODAY: GO TO OBESITYACTION.ORG/JOIN

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