Healthy family traditions

This year, consider setting a goal to have a healthier holiday season. You’ll find it easier when you do this as a family—and everyone will have more energy and feel better for the busy weeks ahead. Try these strategies.

Cut fat in recipes

Use chicken broth (low-sodium) in place of butter in stuffing, mashed potatoes, gravy, and other savory dishes. For sweets, swap out part or all of the oil with unsweetened applesauce or nonfat yogurt. Idea: Go crustless with your pumpkin pie by serving it as custard in small individual bowls.

Halftime walk

Encourage your tween to mix in a little exercise when she attends sporting events. Instead of getting a hot dog during halftime or between periods, she can walk around the field or gym a few times with friends. Or they could go up and down stairs or bleachers (away from busy sections).

More sleep = better nutrition

Not getting enough sleep often leads to poor food choices like eating fattier foods, snacking more, and ignoring fruits and vegetables. Point out that connection to your child, and review these ideas for getting better zzzs:

- **Limit caffeine.** Have her cut out coffee, caffeinated tea, and chocolate after dinner. Caffeine is a stimulant that often affects sleep.
- **Avoid eating close to bedtime.** Digesting food can keep your teen from sleeping soundly. Suggest that she not have any snacks an hour before bed.
- **Get in a habit.** A set bedtime makes it easier to fall asleep and wake up at the same time each day.

Note: Middle and high school students need 9–10 hours of sleep a night.
Becoming a vegetable fan

Your teen already knows that vegetables are good for her. But she still may not like them. Help her add vegetables to her diet with these tips.

Appetizers. If you leave out a plate of vegetables before dinner, chances are she’ll eat them. Try raw green beans or celery for their satisfying crunch or grape tomatoes for a burst of flavor. Or you could slice zucchini or jicama into spears. Tip: Serve with a low-fat onion dip (stir onion soup mix into plain Greek yogurt).

Shrimp Caesar salad
Mix 1 lb. chopped, cooked shrimp with 2 tbsp. light mayonnaise, 3 tbsp. lemon juice, and ½ tsp. garlic powder. In a spinach tortilla, place 1–4 of the shrimp mixture, shredded Romaine lettuce, and grated Parmesan cheese.

Southwest chili
Stir 1 cup cooked brown rice with 1 can drained corn, 1 can beans (rinsed), 1 tsp. cumin powder, ½ tbsp. chili powder, ½ tsp. onion powder, and 1 diced red bell pepper. Spread onto 4 sun-dried tomato tortillas, and sprinkle with low-fat Monterey Jack cheese. Serve with salsa.

It’s a wrap!
Wraps are a quick way to whip up a nutritious meal. Each of these is designed to roll—and go.

Shrimp Caesar salad
Mix 1 lb. chopped, cooked shrimp with 2 tbsp. light mayonnaise, 3 tbsp. lemon juice, and ½ tsp. garlic powder. In a spinach tortilla, place ½ of the shrimp mixture, shredded Romaine lettuce, and grated Parmesan cheese.

Southwest chili
Stir 1 cup cooked brown rice with 1 can drained corn, 1 can beans (rinsed), 1 tsp. cumin powder, ½ tbsp. chili powder, ½ tsp. onion powder, and 1 diced red bell pepper. Spread onto 4 sun-dried tomato tortillas, and sprinkle with low-fat Monterey Jack cheese. Serve with salsa.

Barbecued chicken
Toss 1 lb. cut-up cooked chicken with ¼ cup barbecue sauce. Divide among 4 whole-wheat tortillas, and add a handful of shredded cabbage (or bagged coleslaw mix).

PARENT TO PARENT
Always hungry
My teen, Jasmine, recently started saying she was always hungry—and she was worried she would put on weight if she kept eating. I reminded her that the doctor said at her checkup that her appetite would shoot up as she went through growth spurts.

Jasmine asked her volleyball coach for healthy snack ideas and came home with a good list. Her coach suggested whole grains like popcorn and multigrain cereal, dairy products such as low-fat milk and yogurt, proteins like hard-boiled eggs and sunflower seeds, and, of course, fruits and vegetables.

She keeps the list in her phone, and now Jasmine knows what to grab when she’s hungry. She feels better knowing she’s following a plan, and I hope she won’t be as concerned about gaining weight.

Activity corner
Towel exercises
Look no further than a bath towel for an easy way for your tween to work out at home. Here are three exercises he can try.

1. Back press. Roll up a towel. While standing, hold the towel above your head with your arms straight up. Keep the towel taut as you lower your arms, bending at the elbows, to bring the towel behind your neck. Repeat 10–12 times. Note: Don’t tense your neck.

2. Waist twist. Sit on the floor with bent knees, and lean back. Grip a rolled-up towel with your arms straight out, and twist your upper body right and then left. Aim for 20 reps.

3. Tricep extension. Standing, grip one end of a towel in your right hand, reach up, and let the towel dangle over your back. Grab the bottom of the towel (about ¼ of the way down) with your left hand. Pull the towel down with your left hand and back up to the start position with your right hand. Do 12 reps.

Our purpose
To provide busy parents with practical ways to promote healthy nutrition and physical activity for their children.

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