With homework and tests out of the way, your teenager is likely to have more free time over the summer. What to do with those extra hours? Get active! Encourage him to exercise regularly with these tips.

Start a mini sports league
Suggest that your child choose a time each week (or two or three times a week) for a pickup game of lacrosse or roller hockey with friends. He’ll be more likely to keep up with his mini league if he sets a regular time and place, such as a centrally located park or school.

Train for an event
It’s easier to keep exercising if your teenager has a goal to work toward. Encourage him to sign up for a race or enter a tournament, for instance. Then, he can develop a training plan leading up to the event. Note: Many races now include concerts or other festivities—your teen might be inclined to participate if he knows it’s more than just a race.

Become an explorer
Getting to know your community and state is another way to keep fit. Your child could look at community websites or library books to find places to hike or parks with canoeing. Have him check with your parks and recreation department or ask at the library for a list of happenings like naturalist-led walks or kayaking classes.

Cheese: Lighten up
A good way to trim fat is to think about the cheese you eat. For instance, your child could choose low-fat cheese at the sandwich shop. Or when he makes snacks, he might try stronger cheeses and not use as much. Extra sharp cheddar can stand in for mild, and a sprinkling of Parmesan will make mozzarella go further.

Did You Know?
To participate in fall sports, your kids will probably need to have sports physicals and get medical forms completed. Schedule checkups with their doctor now, or see if the school offers appointments on campus. The medical forms will have to be turned in before sports practice begins—which is often in late summer.

Just for fun
Q: On your way home, you take a right and three lefts. Then, you see two men in masks. Who are they?
A: The umpire and the catcher!

Sundae sense
An occasional scoop of ice cream can be part of a balanced diet, especially if your teen or tween keeps these strategies in mind.

- Go small. Ask for a kid-sized cup if you’re at an ice cream parlor. At home, keep servings small by using a teacup rather than a large bowl.
- Swap the toppings. Substitute fresh berries or cut-up fruit for whipped cream, hot fudge, and sprinkles. The fruit will add just the right taste of summer!
- Lower the fat. Pick reduced-fat ice cream, frozen yogurt, or sorbet. She’ll find these at grocery or convenience stores, as well as in restaurants and ice cream shops.
- Select portion-controlled. Read nutrition labels on ice cream bars and cups at the grocery store. She’s likely to see a good variety at or around 100 calories.
**Camp out the healthy way**

Show your tween how easy it can be to make healthy food choices—even when you’re in a campground—with these suggestions.

**Plan ahead.** Brainstorm together which meals will work best around the campfire. Then, write out a menu, and shop for ingredients. **Idea:** Make tacos by cooking the meat before you go, freezing it, and taking it in a cooler to thaw. At your campsite, serve taco ingredients (the precooked meat, shredded lettuce, diced tomatoes) layered in a cup. Or use a tortilla chip as a scoop—no spoon needed!

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**Be a food blogger**

My daughter, Lily, really enjoys cooking. Since she also likes to write, she decided to start a cooking blog. Luckily, she found a website called blogger.com, where she can post entries for free.

I encouraged her to use blogging as a chance to experiment with healthy recipes. So far it has been exciting for her to share her latest ideas, like “light” brownies or green peppers stuffed with brown rice and vegetables. She loves to snap pictures at every stage and post them along with step-by-step instructions.

Now Lily’s friends—and my friends—are starting to follow her blog. She feels good when they try her recipes and tell her they liked them. Plus, some friends have begun posting their own nutritious recipes in response. It’s good to see her connecting with other teens who like to talk about healthy cooking!

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**Splish, splash, and sweat!**

Whether your child is an avid swimmer or just likes to play in the water, he can get a good workout in the pool. Here’s how.

**Do intervals.** Suggest that he swim one length, rest 30–60 seconds, and repeat. Eventually, he could build up to 2–4 lengths before a break. **Variation:** Swim one length fast and the next one at a relaxed pace.

**Run the lanes.** Instead of swimming, your teen or tween might jog back and forth in the shallow end. Unlike on land where he’s pounding the pavement, pool jogging is easy on his knees.

**Play water ball.** Many community pools have basketball hoops or volleyball nets. Diving for a ball or “running” to make a shot can be good—and fun—exercise.

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**In the Kitchen**

**Burger bonanza**

For a new spin on the classic burger, try these three recipes. Note: Grill or bake each until cooked through, and serve on a whole-wheat bun.

1. **Herbed turkey burgers**
   - Turkey + herbs = delicious.
   - Combine 1 lb. ground turkey breast, 1⁄2 tsp. basil, 1⁄2 tsp. parsley, 1 tsp. lemon juice, 1⁄2 tsp. garlic powder, and 1⁄2 tsp. paprika. Form into four patties.

2. **Inside-out cheeseburgers**
   - In this version, the cheese goes on the inside! Mix together 1 lb. lean ground beef, 1 beaten egg, 6 oz. chopped spinach (thawed or fresh), and 4 oz. feta cheese. Shape into four patties.

3. **Black bean burgers**
   - Vegetarians and nonvegetarians alike can enjoy this meatless burger. Mash black beans (drained and rinsed) from a 16-oz. can. Add 1 egg, 1 cup whole-wheat bread crumbs, 1⁄3 tsp. onion powder, and 1⁄2 tsp. cumin. Mold into six patties. Serve with salsa and avocado slices.