Not hungry? Don’t snack!

At times it can be hard for your child to figure out whether he’s really hungry or just eating out of habit or boredom. To cut down on mindless snacking, share these strategies.

Look for patterns
If your teen always grabs something to eat while watching TV or doing homework, it may be out of habit rather than hunger. Encourage him to wait until he’s finished what he’s doing. Then, instead of eating, he might find he’s ready for a new activity. Tip: Consider having a “kitchen only” rule for eating to discourage mindless snacking.

Chew on it
Brainstorm alternatives to looking for food when he’s bored. He might get together with a friend, build a model rocket, or play the guitar. Or chewing on sugar-free gum may be all he needs. Finally, he may just be thirsty, and sipping on water or hot herbal tea will do the trick.

Walk it off
Staying active can be just the thing to help your child avoid eating out of boredom. Have him walk the dog at the time he normally hits the fridge. Or challenge him to lift weights. Not only will he get exercise, it will also keep his mind off eating—and he may skip the snack altogether.

Q: What type of tree can grow hands?
A: A palm tree!

Getting a food job
Food-related jobs can be a great entry into the workplace—and a great way to build your teenager’s nutrition knowledge. Here are ideas.

Grocery stores
● Stocker: As your teen stocks produce bins, she’ll learn how to tell when fruits and vegetables are ripe. While refilling meat and grocery shelves, she’ll have to watch food expiration dates and practice food safety.
● Cashier/bagger: Ringing up purchases will tune your child into food prices. And bagging groceries will expose her to foods that are new to her.

Restaurants
● Server: Training will prepare her to answer customer questions about how food is prepared, which choices are healthiest, and allergens.
● Prep cook: She’ll get practice in chopping vegetables, making salads, or helping around the kitchen. Plus, she’ll learn cooking techniques from watching chefs.

Awesome asparagus
Asparagus is in season! Full of fiber and nutrients like vitamin A and potassium, asparagus has another benefit—it’s easy to prepare. Snap off the bottoms, place the spears on a baking sheet, and drizzle with olive oil. Roast at 425° for 12–15 minutes. Finish off with fresh-squeezed lemon juice or grated Parmesan cheese.

Did You Know?
Side planks work the whole body. Do a few anytime with this technique: Lie on your left side with your legs extended and stacked. Keeping your left forearm on the ground, rise up, and put your right hand on your right hip. Hold for 10–20 seconds, and switch sides. Try to work up to 30-second or 1-minute holds.

FAST TAKES
Morning routine
For a clever way to sneak in more exercise, suggest this idea to your teen: a mini workout before his shower. While the water is heating up, he could do squats, push-ups, lunges, or sit-ups. Tip: To mix things up, he might vary the exercises or the number of repetitions.

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Just for fun
Q: What type of tree can grow hands?
A: A palm tree!
Be a savvy digital citizen

Your child is probably used to seeing pop-up food ads on social media. Use these suggestions to help her understand how the ads target young people—and how she can avoid buying into an unhealthy message.

- **Become aware.** Have her count the food ads she sees in a week on smartphone apps and social media. She could make a tally mark in a notebook and include what the ad is for. **Tip:** Remind her that these ads can come up in unexpected places like games or ring tones.

- **Consider the message.** Discuss what she notices. You might ask, “What did the food ads have in common?” or “Did the ad make it seem like you’d feel happier or stronger if you ate or drank the product?” Talk about whether you each believe the claims.

- **Find good examples.** To provide balance, look together for apps, podcasts, Facebook pages, and YouTube channels that highlight healthy eating. There are plenty out there—just use a search term like “healthy eating apps.” Also, if she views more healthy-food content, ads will begin popping up in her social media more often for nutritious foods.

Hula hoop workouts

Hula hoops are making a comeback! They’ve become a fun fitness trend, and your tween may enjoy moving beyond standard hula hooping with these five ideas.

1. Walk back and forth or in a circle while keeping the hoop going.
2. Swing the hula hoop around an arm or a leg, and see how long you can keep it going.
3. Place the hula hoop on the ground, and jump into and out of it for 30–60 seconds. For more of a challenge, hop on one leg.
4. Use the hula hoop as a jump rope. Jump along to a favorite jump-roping chant from childhood.
5. Hula hoop to music, and match the beat. When the music picks up, swirl the hoop faster, too.

In the Kitchen

**Instant soup cups**

Create healthier versions of store-bought soup cups with these clever recipes. They’re a great way to use up extra vegetables, too.

**Your teen can make each one in a glass jar (use old pasta sauce jars), and refrigerate for up to a week.**

- **To serve, he should pour into a bowl, add 2 cups boiling water, and wait 3–5 minutes.**
- **Veg-out rice**
  - Cut a low-sodium vegetable bouillon cube in half, and place in a jar. Add ¼ cup frozen chopped vegetables, such as Asian stir-fry, followed by ½ cup cooked brown rice.
- **Chicken ramen**
  - Cook thin spaghetti noodles (fiber-fortified work best) until just tender, and drain. Put half of a low-sodium chicken bouillon cube in a jar, along with 2 tbsp. each of peas (frozen or canned), shredded cabbage, and cooked, cubed chicken. Top with ¼ cup noodles and 1 tsp. sesame oil.