Figuring out portions

Keeping portion sizes in check can go a long way toward helping your teen stay at a healthy weight. To teach your child “portion smarts,” try these ideas.

Measure it out
Look together at foods she typically eats, such as cereal. Ask her to pour out her usual amount. Then, have her measure out a portion based on the serving size on the package. How do the two compare? She might be surprised that recommended servings aren’t as big as she thought.

Choose smaller plates
It may be easier for your teen to keep portions right-sized if her plates and bowls more closely match healthy serving sizes. That way, the food on her plate will look more substantial, and she might not feel like she’s eating less. Tip: Have her drink 1–2 cups of water every half-hour to stay hydrated.

Tip:
Move salad plates and teacups to a more noticeable spot in your cabinets, and encourage her to use them as her everyday plates and bowls.

Use “handy” references
Your child can eyeball healthy portions using her hands. For proteins like steak, pork chops, or chicken, one serving equals the size of her palm (not her whole hand). Her fist is the portion size for pasta or rice. For a serving of pretzels, the amount that fits in her cupped hand is a good estimate.

Did You Know?
Tweens and teens need to be careful when wearing flip-flops. Great for short walks on the beach, flip-flops offer limited support for your child’s foot and leg muscles. For longer walks or more rigorous physical activity, sturdy sneakers are best. Tip: Try to buy flip-flops that have added cushioning and arch support.

Just for fun
Q: When do you go at red and stop at green?
A: When you’re eating a watermelon.

Calorie burn
Imagine if restaurants wrote their menus in terms of exercise. Your teen might think twice about eating that double cheeseburger if he knew what it would take to burn it off! Share stats like these:

- Double cheeseburger = at least 1 hour of running
- Slice of cheese pizza = 22 minutes of biking
- Chocolate milkshake = more than 2½ hours of walking
- Medium French fries = more than 1 hour of basketball

Encourage your child to find the exercise equivalents of his favorite foods. He can look up their calories and then use an online calculator (try myfitnesspal.com/exercise/lookup) to see how many calories are burned with various exercises. Note: The calories burned will vary based on your teen’s size, age, and weight.

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Road-trip snacks

When your family heads out on a day trip or a road trip, take along healthy snacks like these.

**Nuts.** Almonds, walnuts, and pistachios are high in protein, so your kids will feel full longer than if they eat potato chips or other carbohydrate-heavy foods.

**Popcorn.** Plain popcorn is an inexpensive whole-grain snack that's easy to pop and pack.

**Fruit.** Bananas, apples, oranges, and other fresh fruit not only are filled with fiber and nutrients, but also take time to eat—meaning your teen may eat less and feel more satisfied. Likewise, dried apricots, blueberries, and cranberries give him something to chew on for a while.

**Water.** Instead of buying soda or juice, get refillable water bottles. Use frozen fruit (pineapple, peaches) for “ice cubes”—as the “ice” melts, the water will get more flavorful, encouraging your child to drink more of it.

Tip: Pack one set of snacks for the way there and another for the return trip. By having snacks for both directions, your family will be less likely to purchase junk food along the way.

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**Q&A**

**Q:** I'm worried that my middle-school daughter, Samantha, lies around too much. How can I help her be more active?

**A:** Getting your daughter into a fitness habit may take a few tries, but you're smart to start now.

First, consider limiting her screen time (TV, computers, tablets, and phones) to no more than two hours a day.

Next, help her see the fun in fitness. Look for something totally new to her, perhaps fencing, racquetball, or karate. If it's part of a regular class or league, all the better—she'll be with friends or meet new people who will encourage her to keep coming back.

Finally, show interest in her new activity by asking about it or watching her play. Your example is important, too. If she sees you making exercise a priority, she's more likely to do the same.

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**ACTIVITY CORNER**

**Hunt for treasure**

Geocaching is a modern-day treasure hunt that will have your teen roaming through parks and hiking to new destinations—all while following GPS to find a prize. To play along, he can join with family or friends and follow these steps.

1. Download a GPS app onto a smartphone or tablet. Or buy or borrow a handheld GPS device.

2. Register on geocaching.com to get a list of “caches” (containers of treasures) in your area. The website rates the difficulty level for both the terrain and how deeply the cache is hidden.

3. Use the app or device to navigate to the cache. Most are hidden so passersby wouldn't see them, maybe under a rock or inside a hole in a tree trunk. Caches contain small, inexpensive trinkets like a toy car, pencil, or marker.

4. When you find the treasure, sign the logbook inside, take one trinket, and leave another for the next geocacher.

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**In the Kitchen**

**Healthier cookout salads**

Your teen won't notice the trimmed calorie counts in these tasty salads—but she'll surely find they’re delicious!

**Whole-grain macaroni**

Combine ⅓ cup fat-free mayonnaise, 2 tbsp. sweet pickle relish, ⅛ tsp. prepared mustard, ⅛ cup shredded carrots, and ⅛ cup chopped onion. Toss with 3 cups cooked whole-grain macaroni.

**Rainbow coleslaw**

Thinly slice ¼ head red cabbage. Add ⅛ cup thinly sliced yellow, orange, and green bell peppers. Mix with ¼ cup low-fat ranch dressing.

**Fruity couscous**

Stir 1½ tbsp. olive oil, 2 tbsp. orange juice, 1 tbsp. vinegar, and ⅛ tsp. garlic powder into 2 cups cooked whole-wheat couscous. Add 1 cup chopped nectarines and 2 tbsp. each pecan pieces and golden raisins.