

A Healthier Lifestyle for Teen Girls



Nutrition and Body Image

Body image can distort the way a teen girl feels about herself. If she doesn't feel like she's living up to an "ideal" body image, she's at risk for low self-esteem, depression and eating disorders.

A negative body image can damage her relationship with food and nutrition. Share these healthy eating tips with your teen girl and keep them in mind when you're shopping for groceries or preparing meals.

Don't skip meals

- Eat a healthy breakfast to avoid overeating later

Learn simple, healthy food prep

- Grilling, stir-frying, microwaving, baking and boiling are healthier than deep frying
- Trim visible fat before cooking
- Add flavor with herbs, spices, lemon juice or salsas instead of heavy sauces

Limit sugary foods and drinks

- Skip sugary drinks: they're big on calories, low on nutrients
- Enjoy cookies, cakes and candies in moderation
- Try whole-grain desserts

Avoid certain kinds of fats

- Avoid saturated and trans fats: read the labels
- Try lean proteins like beans, fish and poultry without the skin
- Avoid creamy sauces and dressings because they often contain unhealthy fats
- Olive oil and canola oil are healthier choices

Be mindful when eating

- Relax and slow down – it takes about 20 minutes for your brain to signal fullness
- Listen to your body: eat when you're hungry and stop when you're full
- Ask yourself: "Am I eating because I'm stressed? Sad? Bored?"

Avoid "diet thinking"

- All foods can be a part of a healthy diet when enjoyed in moderation
- Focus on small lifestyle changes vs. extreme approaches





Support Your Teen's Healthy Body Image

Buy clothes she likes and feels comfortable wearing.

Donate clothes that make her feel self-conscious or uncomfortable.

Suggest relaxing activities like yoga, listening to music, singing and meditating.

Remind the special girl in your life that everyone's body is different.

Talk with her about media messages that suggest only a certain body type is acceptable and that an attractive appearance is the most important goal. Encourage her to question what she sees and hears.



If you're concerned that a teen girl might have or be at risk for an eating disorder, click to download [Understanding Eating Disorders: A Guide for Parents and Families.](#)



Encourage interaction with positive people who make your teen girl feel accepted and comfortable.

Suggest some of these body-positive writing exercises. Challenge her to list:

- Ten things she likes about her personality (e.g., caring, funny, creative)
- Five things she likes to do when she's feeling healthy (e.g., running, dancing, biking)
- Five favorite parts of her body (e.g., eyes, hair, legs)