

Your Healthy Eating Game Plan

Being a teenager has a lot of demands—juggling school, social life, family life, maybe even a job. You're busy! So, it's important that your food fuels you right. As a team, we'll work together to get you to be your healthiest self so that you can achieve anything you want to—with nothing holding you back.



Be an active part of your health team. You have plenty of people who are ready to make changes with you and to help you with your own goals. Your parents can help by making sure there are plenty of fresh fruits and veggies at home. Tell your parents your favorite fruits and vegetables you'd like to have stocked in the house. Better yet, go shopping with them and see what options are available to you. You have the power to make your diet healthier.¹



Breakfast is an important meal—eat it! Low-fat milk, whole grain toast and English muffins, fresh fruit, oatmeal, omelets filled with delicious, sautéed veggies like red peppers, spinach, mushrooms and a little cheese—there are plenty of tasty and healthy options in the morning.² Whether it's an elaborate meal or something simple, eaten at home or at school there are plenty ways to start your morning right.



You can eat anything if you're making other healthy choices. Yes, anything—as long as it's in moderation. This isn't "dieting." You're filling up at meals with healthy foods, plenty of fresh fruits, vegetables, whole grains, beans, nuts, eggs, and lean meat, so there's no reason you can't have a treat every once in a while. Don't worry about eliminating "bad" foods—obsessing over what you think you shouldn't have often backfires anyway.²



Be strategic with your sugar. Drinks like soda, iced tea and sports drinks are very high in added sugar, which doesn't do your health any favors. Reimagine your soda as a dessert, not a regular beverage. Sugar isn't off limits, but is soda *really that* special? Science suggests that sugary drinks may be less healthy than other sugary foods. So, if you're just having soda because it's there, swap it out for water, milk, or seltzer instead and save your sugar for when you can really savor it—dessert!³



Make heart-smart choices. Foods that will help you with your goals are rich in potassium (like bananas, potatoes, and dried apricot), fiber (like whole grain products, fruits and vegetables), magnesium (like nuts, spinach, and beans) and calcium (like dairy, fortified orange juice, and dark, leafy greens). Also, opt for low-sodium foods and decaf beverages when possible.⁴

Additional Resources

- Eating Tips for Girls: choosemyplate.gov/ten-tips-eat-smart-and-be-active-as-you-grow
- The Dining Decisions Game: <https://www.cdc.gov/bam/nutrition/index.html>
- Take Charge of Your Health: niddk.nih.gov/health-information/weight-management/take-charge-health-guide-teenagers
- Ways to Be Active: <https://www.fueluptoplay60.com/>
- How to Build a Healthy Plate: hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/kids-healthy-eating-plate/

REFERENCES

1. Pearson N, Ball K, Crawford D. Predictors of changes in adolescents' consumption of fruits, vegetables and energy-dense snacks. *Br J Nutr.* 2011;105(5):795-803. doi: 10.1017/S0007114510004290.

This study sought to identify the individual, social, and environmental causes of increases of fruits and vegetables, as well as decreases in energy dense snacks. To do so, the researchers used food frequency questionnaires of 1,850 students at baseline and two years later. They also took surveys measuring perceived importance of eating healthy food, self-efficacy, perceived availability of a healthy role model, and perceived availability of different food at home.

Increased fruit consumption was associated with value for healthy eating, self-efficacy for increasing fruit intake, and mother as a healthy role model. Perceived availability of energy-dense snacks at home was associated with decreases in fruit consumption. Increased vegetable consumption was associated with self-efficacy, having a supportive best friend, and availability of fruits and vegetables at home.

One of four theorized ways to increase self-efficacy is through verbal persuasion. Also, maternal role modeling also appears to play an important role, making her an important target for nutrition interventions.

2. Neumark-Sztainer D, Wall M, Haines J, Story M, Eisenberg, ME. Why does dieting predict weight gain in adolescents? findings from project EAT-II: A 5-year longitudinal study. *J Am Diet Assoc.* 2007;107(3):448-455. doi: 10.1016/j.jada.2006.12.013.

The goal is to assess the question why dieting among adolescents is associated with weight gain over time by looking at healthy diet habits, including binge eating, breakfast eating, consumption of fruits and vegetables, and exercising. To do this, they took survey data on these behaviors and compared it to how much students reported dieting to lose weight as well as longitudinal BMI data. In girls, "dieting" was associated with bingeing, skipping breakfast, and low intake of fruits and vegetables. These behaviors were also associated with increased BMI over time. Dieters gained about .7 BMI units more than non-dieters.

3. Wang J, Light K, Henderson M, et al. Consumption of added sugars from liquid but not solid sources predicts impaired glucose homeostasis and insulin resistance among youth at risk of obesity. *J Nutr.* 2014;144(1):81-86. doi: 10.3945/jn.113.182519.

The goal of this study was to determine if added sugar is associated with weight gain, impaired blood glucose maintenance, and reduced insulin sensitivity in adolescents at risk for obesity. Additionally, they compared whether sugar sweetened beverages were worse for these measures than food with added sugars. To do so, they analyzed 630 children at age 8-10 and again two years later. They took a dietary assessment, body measures (height, weight, waist circumference, BMI, fat mass, and puberty status), oral glucose tolerance tests, and physical activity assessment. They found that only sugar sweetened beverages impacted blood sugar

metabolism measures, while added sugar from food sources were not associated with blood sugar measures. Added sugar (liquid or solid) was not associated with changes in adiposity.

4. Obarzanek E, Wu CO, Cutler JA, Kavey RW, Pearson GD, Daniels SR. Prevalence and incidence of hypertension in adolescent girls. *J Pediatr, The*. 2010;157(3):467.e5.
<https://www.clinicalkey.es/playcontent/1-s2.0-S0022347610002866>. doi:
10.1016/j.jpeds.2010.03.032.

The goal of this study was to estimate the prevalence and incidence of elevated blood pressure among adolescent girls, as well as establish factors associated with hypertension and prehypertension. To do this, they looked at the health data of 2,368 girls at age 9 or 10 through age 18 or 19 as part of the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute Growth and Health Study. Data collection points over 10 annual visits included blood pressure, height, weight, weight circumference, demographic and socioeconomic information, parental education, food records, and physical activity questionnaires. They found that higher intakes of fiber, potassium, magnesium, and calcium were each associated with maintaining a healthy blood pressure. Though only BMI and potassium predicted hypertension, the authors recognize the importance of other nutrients, including sodium. Higher calorie and caffeine were also associated with hypertension incidence.