

Nutrition

The teen years are in an important period of growth and increasing independence. This is a great time to reevaluate all of your health habits. Establishing a healthy diet, regular sleep habits, and an active lifestyle are important both now and for your future health as an adult.

- An easy to remember message about important healthy habits is “**9-7-5-2-1-0**”:
 - **9: Teens need at least 9 hours of sleep.** Getting the proper amount of sleep helps with how you function during the day and is also vital in maintaining a healthy weight
 - **.7: Eat breakfast 7 days a week.** Breakfast jump starts the metabolism, helps you perform better in school, and helps prevent overeating later in the day. Skipping breakfast is associated with weight gain.
 - **5: Eat at least 5 servings of fruits and vegetables per day.** Use the MyPlate visual guide and make ½ of your plate fruits and vegetables at meals and include fruits and vegetables for snacks. For specific recommendations on the amount of each food group your child should eat per day based on age, sex, and activity level, please visit chooseMyPlate.gov.
 - **2: Spend less than 2 hours a day on screen time.** This includes TV, video games, recreational computer time, smart tablets and smart phones. Turn off the TV during meals. Keep the TV and computer out of bedrooms. TV’s in bedrooms contribute to disordered sleep and increase exposure to commercials that result in cravings for unhealthy food.
 - **1: Participate in at least 1 hour of physical activity per day.**
 - **0: Drink almost no soda, diet soda, sports drinks, and fruit drinks a day.** Even 100% fruit juice contains a large amount of sugar. Water and nonfat (skim) or low fat (1%) are the best drinks for you.

Healthy Eating Patterns

The following tips also help establish healthy eating patterns:

- Maintain regular meal and snack times. Random snacking and fast foods lead to skipping meals and contribute to excess weight gain.
- Make regular meals and exercise priorities.
- Find simple, healthy alternatives to fast food.
- Avoid oversized portions.
- Aim for an appropriate and recommended calorie level for your age, gender, and activity level. The following table serves as a guide for the recommended amount of calories for you.
- All teens need to eat well-balanced, nutritious meals every day. We discourage eliminating any food group from your daily meals and also do not recommend fad diets. We recognize the pressure to be thin can lead to unhealthy eating patterns. If you are considering adopting certain eating behaviors (like vegetarianism) or would like guidance on how to have a healthier lifestyle, please talk to your doctor.
- Although parents cannot control what their teen eats when they are away from home, they can make sure that healthy foods, such as fruits and vegetables, are available and high calorie, low nutrient items, such as sugar sweetened beverages and salty snacks are limited in the home.

Recommended Daily Calories

Gender	Age (Years)	Sedentary	Moderately Active	Active
Female	4-8	1200-1400	1400-1600	1400-1800
	9-13	1400-1600	1600-2000	1800-2200
Male	4-8	1200-1400	1400-1600	1600-2000
	9-13	1600-2000	1800-2200	2000-2600

Sedentary means a lifestyle that includes only the light physical activity associated with typical day-to-day life.

Moderately active means a lifestyle that includes physical activity equivalent to walking about 1.5 to 3 miles per day at 3 to 4 miles per hour, in addition to the light physical activity associated with typical day-to-day life.

Active means a lifestyle that includes physical activity equivalent to walking more than 3 miles per day at 3 to 4 miles per hour, in addition to the light physical activity associated with typical day-to-day life.

Do I Have Excess Weight?

- Obesity is increasing at an alarming rate in the United States. Excess weight is associated with health problems such high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, sleep apnea (snoring and gasping during sleep), depression, and low self-esteem in both adolescents and adults.

- Body Mass Index (BMI) is widely used to help categorize weight. BMI compares height and weight, and norms vary by age and sex. A BMI between the 85th and 95th percentile is defined as overweight, and a BMI at or above the 95th percentile is defined as obese. If your BMI is in the overweight or obese zone, talk to your doctor about developing a healthy eating plan.

Should I Take A Daily Multivitamin?

The best way to take in vitamins is by eating nutritious foods, especially fruits, vegetables, and food made with whole grains. However, many teens' diets are lacking in essential nutrients. If you consistently do not have a well-balanced and nutritious diet, you should consider starting the habit of taking a daily multivitamin. This may be especially important for adolescent girls. As young women approach the child-bearing years, good nutrition is an important way to help prevent some birth defects. It is recommended that all women ages 15-45 take 0.4mg (400 micrograms) a day of folic acid (a B vitamin), the amount in a daily multivitamin, to prevent two common birth defects – spina bifida and anencephaly.

Bone Health

- **The teen years are a critical time for bone formation.** Close to half of a person's bone mass is accumulated during these years. If you do not have adequate calcium in your diet, you may be at risk for osteoporosis (weak bones) as an adult and may even be at risk for fractures now.
- **The recommended daily intake of calcium for ages 9 to 18 is 1300 mg.** Make sure that your diet provides this amount of calcium. Calcium intake has been steadily decreasing over the past two decades. Most adolescents only get 400-800 mg of calcium a day, with girls consuming the least. One of the major reasons why adolescents have such low calcium intake is because soft drinks have replaced milk in their diet.
 - Drop soft drinks from your diet.
 - Milk and milk products are the best sources of dietary calcium. Aim for three to four servings of milk or milk products a day.
 - Calcium fortified foods like juices, bread, and cereals can supply needed calcium, especially if you do not like milk/milk products or do not tolerate milk.
 - Calcium in green leafy vegetables is poorly absorbed. It is not possible to obtain a large amount of your calcium needs from vegetables alone.
 - Foods that are high in salt, such as most fast foods, chips, and most prepared foods, increase calcium loss and can harm bone development.
 - If you do not consume enough calcium in your diet, you should consider taking a calcium supplement.

Physical Health

- **Am I Still Growing?** Although there are exceptions, most girls reach their adult height by 15 or 16 years of age. Most boys reach their adult height by 17 or 18 years, although there are significant numbers of "late bloomer" boys who continue to grow in height beyond 18 years of age. Even after adult height is reached, your shoulders, hips and pelvis will continue to broaden for several years. This "filling-out" of the skeleton ends in most girls by 18 years, but continues in boys for several years after age 18.
- **Vaccines It is important to keep vaccines current.** At age 16 you will need your 2nd meningococcal vaccine, which prevents a deadly brain infection. Also during adolescence you will need a series of three HPV (Human Papilloma Virus) vaccines. This vaccine is now recommended for both boys and girls and helps to prevent many types of cancer including cervical, penile, mouth, and throat. HPV vaccine has been in use since 2006 and is very safe.
- **Testicular Cancer.** Cancer of the testicles is the most common solid cancer in males ages 15-35. You should seek medical care if any swelling, lumps, or changes in your testicles are noticed.

Psychological Health and Growth

- Although you may be about to be finished growing taller, you will continue to grow and change psychologically throughout your life. **Late adolescence is a time when teens begin to develop independence from peers as well as from parents.** Thinking becomes more adult-like as teens prepare for careers and long-term relationships. Serious thinking about the future occurs.
- **The choices that you make now will absolutely affect your future success.** You are creating yourself, who you are now, and who you want to be.
- **You can choose to do your best in school and show respect to the people around you.** By doing this you gain respect for yourself and from others, including teachers, parents, and other teens. Doing well in school will ensure that you can achieve your future college and/or career goals.
- **You can choose to stay away from drugs and alcohol.** Teens who are depressed or anxious or feel the need to fit in are especially vulnerable to drug use. Surround yourself with people who make good choices and avoid those who bring you down. If you find

that you regularly are using drugs and alcohol, get help. Talk to your parents or to a trusted adult. You may also call the National Drug Abuse Referral Line for local drug treatment options: 1-800-662-4357.

- **You can choose to protect yourself from unplanned pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases.** The only way to 100% protect yourself is to abstain from sex. If you choose to have sex, be responsible. Effective birth control and condoms need to be used every time. If you have questions talk to your doctor. If you have sex you need to be checked yearly for sexually transmitted diseases (STD's). If you have symptoms you should be checked right away. If you are a gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender youth who needs support, contact Out Youth, 512-419-1233, outyouth.org.
- **You can choose to get help when you need it.** Adolescence can be a difficult time. Relationships with family members, peers, and friends are changing. Teens can often feel lonely or worried or sad. Signs that you may need help include trouble sleeping, eating too little or too much, crying often, cutting, feeling worthless or hopeless, and isolating yourself from family and friends. Please talk to your parents or a doctor if you are experiencing any of these. If you need someone to talk to or have plans to hurt yourself call: **National Suicide Prevention Hotline: 1-800-273-TALK**

Safety

- **Relationship Safety.** You can suffer abuse from family, friends, partners, and peers. Abuse is not always hitting. Forms of non-physical abuse include yelling, threatening, name-calling, extreme possessiveness, and manipulation. An abuser may bully you, boss you around, get angry or jealous when you spend time with others, swear at you, blame you for his/her problems, insult or embarrass you, or pressure you to do drugs or have sex. If you are in an abusive relationship get help. Talk to a parent or another trusted adult. The following resources are available also.
 - **Family Violence Legal Hotline:** 1- 800-374-HOPE
 - **Sexual Assault Legal Hotline:** 1 888-296-SAFE
 - **Texas Youth Hotline:** 1-800-210-2278
 - **National Domestic Violence Hotline:** 1-800-799-SAFE
- **Car Safety. Motor vehicle accidents are the leading cause of death for teenagers.** Teens are much more likely to have a car accident than adults.
 - Always wear your seat belt.
 - Never drive if you've been drinking alcohol or taking drugs, even marijuana.
 - Never allow someone who has been drinking or taking drugs, even marijuana/pot, to drive you anywhere.
 - Do not text or use your cell phone while driving.
- **Bike, Skate, and Skateboard Safety.** Every year many teens are killed or seriously injured by sport-related head injuries.
 - Always wear a helmet.
 - If you cycle after dark, use appropriate lights, reflectors, and reflective vests.
- **Sun Safety.** Skin damage from the sun causes premature wrinkles, age spots, and most importantly cancer.
 - Wear sunscreen outside.
 - Do not use tanning salons.
 - Self-examine moles using the Melanoma Identification Alphabet.
- **Melanoma Identification Alphabet.** If any of the following describe your mole or moles, please see your physician.
 - A. Asymmetry – one side of the spot different from the other
 - B. Border – irregularity, with notched, blurred, or ragged edges
 - C. Color – not uniform, ranging from tan to black
 - D. Diameter – larger than a pencil eraser
- **Gun Safety.** It is best to keep guns out of your home. If your family chooses to keep a gun, store it unloaded in a locked place, separate from the ammunition. It is best not to visit homes when guns are not stored properly. You are in more danger of being shot by yourself, a friend, or a family member than being shot by an intruder.