



WEIGHT MANAGEMENT

Good eating habits and regular exercise will set you up for a lifetime of general good health.

What is a healthy diet for teenagers?

- A variety of foods such as vegetables, fruit, and dairy products are critical to getting the recommended amounts of vitamins and minerals. Eating just one type of food from a food group often will result in poor nutrition. To help you eat a variety of foods, choose foods from all the colors of the rainbow, such as apples, carrots, bananas, broccoli and blueberries.
- Healthy diets are low in fats, sugars, and salt.
- Vitamins cannot replace balanced meals and healthy snacks.
- A balanced diet is made up of food from the dairy, meat, vegetable, fruit, and grain groups. The amount needed depends on age, sex, and activity level. It is recommended that teens eat approximately:
 - 6 ounces of grains, with one half of the servings being whole grains (eg, cereal, oatmeal, or brown rice)
 - 2.5 cups of vegetables
 - 1.5 cups of fruits (eg, one apple = 1 cup)
 - 3 cups of dairy products (preferably nonfat and low-fat products)
 - 5 ounces of meat or meat alternatives each day. As an example, 3 ounces of meat is the size of a deck of cards.
- The number of calories required to keep your weight steady depends on your age, height, weight, and the amount of exercise you get. A teenager that is not very active may need fewer calories, whereas an active teenager may need a lot more calories (Table 1).

What if you do not eat meat?

- Vegetarians do not eat meat, fish, or poultry.
- Vegans are vegetarians who do not eat any animal products, including milk, cheese, eggs or other dairy products.
- The key to a healthy diet, as with any diet, is to eat a wide variety of foods, including fruits, vegetables, plenty of leafy greens, and whole grain products. For vegetarians, it is extremely important to get nutrients such as protein and iron (more commonly found in poultry and meat) from foods such as nuts, seeds, and beans.

How much should you exercise?

- Experts recommend 60 minutes of moderate physical activity most days of the week.
- Exercise may include the following types:
 - Aerobic exercise is continuous activity in which breathing becomes faster and the heart rate increases. This type of physical activity makes your heart and lungs get a work out too, which keeps your whole body healthy and fit.
 - Life exercises can be any physical activities that increase fitness. It can be done every day and becomes part of your daily routine. It may be as easy as walking fast to the mailbox.

How can you stay fit?

- Choose one or more physical activities that you like, then do that activity for at least 60 minutes most days of the week. Before you know it, exercise will become a regular part of your life.
- You can participate in a team or individual sport in school or after school.
- If you are not used to exercising, try to slowly increase the amount of physical activity that you do each day.
 - Use the stairs instead of the elevator.
 - Offer to help your parent or guardian to carry in the groceries, do yard work, wash the car, or vacuum.
 - Go for a walk with friends and family and try to increase the distance gradually.
 - Make sure gym class is not your only activity.

What are some exercises that you can do?

- The following options are good life exercises:
 - Taking stairs
 - Walking
 - Bicycling

Table 1. Approximate Calories by Activity Level Needed to Maintain Weight in a Teenaged Female

| Activity Level | Approximate Calories Needed Each Day to Maintain Weight |
|--|---|
| Not active (you do not exercise at all) | 1,800 |
| Somewhat active (you exercise some days of the week) | 2,000 |
| Active (you exercise most days of the week) | 2,300 |





- The following options are good aerobic exercises:
 - Basketball
 - Soccer
 - Aerobics class
 - Skating
 - Jogging
 - Swimming

How much should you weigh?

- One in three high-school girls think they are overweight. In reality, only a small fraction of these teenagers are overweight.
- Television shows and magazines are filled with thin women, which can give the wrong idea about what is a healthy body weight.
- A body mass index (BMI) calculation can be used to see if your weight is healthy. It is computed as weight (in pounds) divided by height (in inches) squared multiplied by 700. For instance, if a girl weighs 150 pounds and is 5'5" (65 inches) tall, her BMI calculation would be $(150/65^2) \times 700 = 24.85$. A BMI calculator is available at www.acog.org/goto/teens.
- To determine if you have a weight problem, calculate your BMI and compare it to the growth charts found at the web site of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nhanes/growth-charts/set1clinical/cj411024.pdf). If you are at or above the 95th percentile, you are overweight. If you are between the 85th percentile and the 94th percentile, you are at risk for becoming overweight. In either case, you should talk with your parent(s) or guardian and your health care provider about how you can reach a healthy body weight.

How does being overweight affect your health?

- Being overweight can put you at risk for many health problems. Overweight teenagers are at higher risk of the following conditions:
 - Irregular menstrual periods
 - Severe asthma
 - Sleep disorders
 - High blood pressure levels
 - High cholesterol levels

- If teenagers remain overweight into adulthood, they become at risk of the following serious diseases:
 - Heart disease
 - Stroke
 - Diabetes mellitus
 - Arthritis
 - Gall bladder disease
 - Some cancers, including breast, endometrial (lining of the uterus), kidney, colon, and esophageal cancer

What should you do if you are overweight and want to lose weight?

- Every teenager is different, and losing weight may or may not be appropriate. It often depends on your age, your height, and other medical conditions. If you are not sure what to do, talk to a parent, guardian, or doctor.
- The best ways are to eat less and exercise more.
- Although most teenaged girls rely on dieting alone to lose weight, regular exercise is key to helping you reach your goal and stay at a healthy weight.
- The first priority should be to exercise regularly and then work at increasing the length of time and intensity of the exercise.
- A combination of activities is most likely to keep you interested in exercise so you will not get bored. For example, biking, walking, exercise classes, tennis, and swimming can be challenging and fun.
- A low-calorie diet can be added to an exercise routine as part of a weight-loss program.
- Diets should never go below 1,200 calories per day. You need at least that many calories to get enough nutrients. If you have concerns, please contact your health care professional.
- Do not be fooled by fad diets. Although, you may lose weight at first, most girls who follow quick weight loss diets gain the weight back when they stop dieting.
- It is important to remember that just because a product is low fat, does not always mean it has fewer calories.

- You do not have to restrict your eating to lose weight. Making simple changes, such as ordering smaller portions rather than super-sizing your meals, can result in gradual weight loss over time.
- A successful weight-loss program depends on good planning and an understanding of basic nutrition. A nutritionist (someone who specializes in helping people with nutrition and weight-loss plans) can help you figure out a program that is right for you. If you decide to make an appointment with a nutritionist, it is a good idea to bring the person with you who usually does the cooking for your family, such as a parent, guardian, or sibling.
- Eating healthy meals and snacks and managing your weight as a teenager will help keep you on the right track as you become an adult.

What is an eating disorder?

- Teenagers with bulimia nervosa binge or purge (overeat and vomit, take laxatives, or exercise too much) and may be of high, average or low body weight. Binge eating disorder is when someone eats a large quantity of food but does not purge.
- Using chemical substances to make you vomit is very dangerous and can cause damage to your heart.
- Teenagers with anorexia nervosa do not eat enough to keep their bodies working normally. They are unable to keep their weight in a healthy range, which puts them at risk of serious medical complications, such as osteoporosis (weak bones) and death, if they do not get treatment.
- Teenagers who have signs of anorexia nervosa often think they are "fat" even though their body weight is below normal.
- If you or someone you know has symptoms of an eating disorder, it is important to talk with a trusted adult and a health care provider and get help.
- To help figure out if you or another person you know has or is likely to have an eating disorder, take the quiz at the Anorexia Nervosa and Related Eating Disorders, Inc web site (www.anred.com/slf_tst.html).

For More Information

The following organizations and web sites have resources and information that may be of interest to you. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) does not necessarily endorse the views expressed or the facts presented by these organizations or their web sites. In addition, ACOG does not endorse any commercial products that may be advertised or available directly from these organizations or on their web sites.

American Academy of Family Physicians

Telephone: (913) 906-6000 or (800) 274-2237

Web: www.aafp.org or familydoctor.org

American Academy of Pediatrics

Telephone: (847) 434-4000

Web: www.aap.org

American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance

Telephone: (703) 476-3400 or (800) 213-7193

Web: www.aahperd.org/index.cfm

American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists

Telephone: (202) 638-5577 or (800) 673-8444

Web: www.acog.org

American College of Sports Medicine

Telephone: (317) 637-9200

Web: www.acsm.org

American Dietetic Association

Telephone: (800) 877-1600

Web: www.eatright.org

American Heart Association

Telephone: (800) AHA-USA-1 (242-8721)

Web: www.americanheart.org

Anorexia Nervosa and Related Eating Disorders, Inc. (ANRED)

Telephone: (847) 831-3438

Web: www.anred.com

AWARE Foundation

Telephone: (215) 955-9847

Web: www.awarefoundation.org

BAM! Body and Mind

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Telephone: (404) 639-3534 or (800) 311-3435

Web: Food and nutrition: www.bam.gov/sub_foodnutrition/index.html

Center for Young Women's Health

Telephone: (617) 355-2994

Web: www.youngwomenshealth.org

MyPyramid.gov

USDA Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion

Telephone: (888) 7-PYRAMID (779-7264)

Web: www.mypyramid.gov

National Agricultural Library

Food and Nutrition Information Center

Telephone: (301) 504-5414

Web: www.nutrition.gov

National Association for Health & Fitness

Telephone: (716) 583-0521

Web: www.physicalfitness.org

National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion—Healthy Schools Healthy Youth!

Telephone: (800) CDC-INFO (232-4636)

Web: www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/index.htm

VERB: www.verbnow.com or

<http://www.cdc.gov/spanish/verb> (Spanish)

National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute

Telephone: (301) 592-8573

Web: www.nhlbi.nih.gov

The Obesity Society

Telephone: (301) 563-6526

Web: www.obesity.org

U.S. Department of Health & Human Services

Office of the Surgeon General

Telephone: (301) 443-4000

Web: www.surgeongeneral.gov

Overweight in Children and Adolescents: www.surgeongeneral.gov/topics/obesity/calltoaction/fact_adolescents.htm

