



HELPING TEENS AVOID COMMON HEALTH PITFALLS

Make Healthy Eating Fun

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When it comes to keeping your teenager healthy, nutritional education is as important as any of the many subjects he or she studies in school. Unlike academics, learning healthy eating habits starts at home. Educating teenagers about food is paramount for helping them maintain a healthy weight, positive moods and the brain power they need in order to thrive. The most common pitfalls are sugar addiction, overuse of technology, lack of exposure to a variety of whole foods and unsupervised access to processed foods.

As a health coach working with adolescents, I understand that young people exist in a social environment that does not always encourage a healthy lifestyle. However, the right tools can help your teen avoid these common health pitfalls.

Begin With Fun Experimentation

Many teenagers believe that hamburgers and pizza are healthy, but they've never tried a kiwi or a mixed green salad. Chances are good that like most teens, your child is satiated on calories, yet nutritionally starved.

Make shopping for and preparing healthy foods a fun experience by experimenting together. Sample new foods and try to make healthy meals together. Use the template of a Mediterranean diet, which is rich in whole grain, fruits, fish and healthy fats. Remember that the goal is nutrition-dense meals that are lower in calories.

Work as a team on eliminating

unhealthy foods by introducing healthier alternatives. Incorporate one new healthy food choice at a time. While you're at it, excite your teen about the nutritional properties in certain foods, stressing how the food will be great for their physical appearance, their mood and their energy levels. Teens, like the rest of us, respond to emotional cues.

Simple Examples

Have your teen swap salad croissants for raw walnuts and almonds. Mention how the Vitamin E, Omega 3 fatty acids and protein in that mixed nut blend will give them gorgeous hair and skin, or help them build stronger muscles.

Switch from french fries to sweet potatoes, from butter to olive oil, and from fatty salad dressings to creamy homemade hummus. Create colorful sampler plates full of fresh fruits and veggies, and play around with different tastes and textures. If there are certain raw vegetables that your teen does not enjoy, try dipping them in hummus, sprinkling on some seasoning or sautéing for a different taste and texture. For teens that are resistant to green vegetables, I recommend using a green powder supplement by Amazing Grass, called "Green All Natural Drink Powder Superfood."

Create cold delicious smoothies by blending frozen fruits, a protein powder (I recommend Sunwarrior Warrior Blend Powder or Vega One - All-in-One Nutritional Shake) with coconut, rice or almond milk as a base.

Keep Your Teen Hydrated

Since our bodies are made up largely of water, staying hydrated is necessary for good health. Teens can

sometimes actually mistake dehydration for hunger and reach for junk food for a quick fix, when the solution lies in an 8oz. glass of water. For teenagers who prefer sodas and fruity drinks, I recommend flavoring their water. There are plenty of healthy ways to transform water from bland to flavorful.

Listen More... Talk Less

Create a safe environment where your teen can share their concerns. Be a support system when they are hurt; be a cheerleader when they are proud of an achievement. Direct your teen's outlets for self-expression towards the use of journaling, writing or reading poetry, listening to music, jumping rope, walking, or deep breathing. Encourage extracurricular hobbies and interests. Sit and read together. A teenager's emotional life is rich, and can be overwhelming at times. Don't forget to tune in to your teen's emotional and social world.

Some Quick Tips:

*Add lemon juice, peppermint oil, orange peels, or herbal, caffeine-free and sugar free teas to your teen's water for a flavorful kick.

*Planned meals equal healthier meals, while last minute meals tend to lean towards processed convenience foods.

*Invest in a blender and a juicer for your home to whip up smoothies, green juices and hummus. **IMAGE**

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