

Healthy Teens

March 2019 Parent Newsletter



Nutrition Math: Are “treats” adding up?

Your teenager may have more chances to choose or purchase their own foods as they get older. It can become challenging for parents to influence their teen’s food choices when peer pressure, time, marketing and cost also affect their decisions. Your teen could walk to the corner store for a snack, buy cookies from the cafeteria, grab a pop from the vending machine, or eat a hotdog and some chips while attending a sports game. It can add up!

When teenagers fill up on “treat foods”, they miss out on healthy foods with more nutrition, such as whole grains, healthy fats, and vitamins and minerals. Good nutrition is important for teens, it supports physical and mental growth and development. This is also an important time to help your teen develop healthy eating habits for their future. Talk with your teen about food and nutrition. Let them

know that unhealthy eating habits can impact growth, physical performance and their ability to learn and concentrate in school. As they grow up, they may begin to think of these things on their own and shift towards healthier choices. To help you teen develop healthy eating habits try to:

- Keep cut-up vegetables in the fridge and a fruit bowl on the counter for easy access.
- Have whole grain crackers and cheese on hand for a fibre and protein rich snack.
- Encourage your teen to make a healthy lunch in the evening for the next day. Have them pack healthy snacks if they are buying a cafeteria lunch on other days.

➤ **For healthy food and snack ideas, visit**

<https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/info/nutrition/if-nfs-healthy-snacking.pdf>

Articles

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How Much Sleep Do Teens Need?

Health advice is as easy as 8-1-1

Did you know you can get trusted health advice around the clock from a registered nurse by dialing Health Link at 8-1-1?

Health Link is Alberta’s free 24/7 health information and advice line. They can help assess symptoms and help you decide if you need to seek medical attention.



How Much Sleep Do Teens Need?

According to the *Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines, for Children and Youth*, youth aged 14-17 years should get 8-10 hours of sleep a night. Yet only 15% percent of teens reported sleeping 8 hours on school nights!

Why so many Z's? Teens are growing rapidly and need enough rest to support these changes. Not getting enough sleep will limit your teen's ability to learn, listen and solve problems. It's also linked to obesity, depression and anxiety.

What makes it harder for your teen to get to sleep? Teen's sleep patterns shift toward later times for both sleeping and waking. This is because melatonin (the hormone that makes you feel sleepy) is produced later at night in teens. So it's natural for your teen to feel awake later and sleep in later (e.g., 11pm to 8 am). As well, there are many things that can compete with your teen's time and attention versus the need for sleep (e.g., homework, sports, social media, work, worries and friends).



Here are some tips to help your teen to get a good night sleep:

- Talk to them about why it's important to go to bed and wake up at the same time each day.
- Avoid caffeine (e.g., pop, energy drinks, coffee) after 3pm.
- Keep their bedroom screen-free (e.g., no cell phones, tablets, TVs, computers).

If you are worried that your teen is getting too little or too much sleep, consult with your healthcare provider.

Here are some tips for your sleep:

- Be active. But not within 3 hours of bedtime.
- Avoid alcohol before bedtime. It can wake you up during the night.
- Avoid caffeine 4 to 6 hours before bedtime.
- Avoid smoking too close to bedtime.
- Avoid difficult conversations before bedtime.