

**Nutrition Tips for Teens**

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I'm an eighth grader in Branford, Connecticut. Now, I may only be a teen, but I still do take pride in the fact that I know a lot about nutrition and generally like the subject. I also like writing about things I enjoy. You put the two things together, and, well, I just had to write an article about nutrition. Here are some tips for good health that will help you feel good and look good.

**1. Drink water**

Lots of it. Drinking water has been proven to be directly linked to losing or maintaining a healthy weight. It will also, obviously, keep your refreshed and energized.

**2. Get sleep**

What? That's not about eating! Wrong. Sleeping is also linked to your nutrition. Not only does it give you the energy to keep moving (exercise) and stay awake, it can also affect how you eat. Studies have shown a link between sleep deprivation and overeating. Confused? Just try to go to bed earlier to get at least eight hours of slumber a day.

**3. Get lots of fiber**

Fiber is possibly the single most important piece of nutrition. It gives you energy and, more importantly, fills you up without filling you out. That's right. When hungry, you're not necessarily supposed to eat a lot of food; you're supposed to eat a lot of fiber, no matter the size or amount of actual food. Take one of those little Fiber One bars, for example. Pretty small, yes, but packed with fiber, therefore squashing your hunger (and they're pretty tasty, too!).

**4. Eat a big breakfast**

Well, not really a *big* breakfast necessarily, just a fiber-rich breakfast. Like I said perviously, fiber makes you feel full. You want to get as much fiber in your breakfast as possible so you'll be less hungry throughout the day, or at least until lunch time. That'll save you a snack or two, preventing those empty calories from entering your body. Amy's frozen breakfast burritos tastes great, and will fill you up with great healthy stuff.

**5. Get lots of protein**

Protein helps build muscle and strength. It's perfect to maximize the value of exercise exactly because of that reason. It also boosts metabolism, which is huge for good nutrition. Your basal metabolic rate (the calories you burn doing nothing) is increased by protein. That means that the more protein you eat, the more you'll burn while sleeping or even just sitting watching TV. It's perfect for a pre- or post-workout snack, because of the muscle and strength it builds. Try having some Greek yogurt, nuts, or meat before or after your next workout, which brings me to my next tip...

**6. Get some exercise in**

Okay, let's face it -- we're not Olympic athletes. We don't train hard every day of our lives. Most of us would like to, but just don't have the time. Well, guess what? If you're following these tips, you're probably exercising right now! That's right. Because if you eat right, with enough protein and fiber, you'll build up a very good metabolism. That means you'd be burning calories all the time, even right now while reading this. Personally I consider anything that burns calories or fat or other nasty stuff exercise. So you should be proud of your workout! However, if you do get the time, it is good to get some real exercise in. It could be as simple as taking a stroll downtown, or something much more serious, like a long run. But don't freak out because you don't think you work out enough, because only 15 percent of all calories burned comes from exercise like at a gym (so focus more on the other 85 percent).

**7. Cook for yourself**

Why go out to a restaurant and hand all your nutritional responsibilities over to a waiter? You could easily make a simple recipe at home that's twice as healthy. Yes, twice. Most times home-cooked meals are so much healthier than at a restaurant or a supermarket, unless it's some sort of health store (which even then can be deceptive). There are terrific quick and easy healthy items in grocery stores now, like Minute brand microwave brown rice in individual servings -- easy and tasty!

**8. Don't always trust ads**

"It's healthy!" "All-natural!" "Lose weight now!" Come on, admit it. We've all fallen victim to one of these sorts of ads once. Just try to tell me you've never bought something because it was "all-natural" and you thought it would be healthy. Well, natural does not always mean healthy. Sometimes it does, but there is no USDA-officiated definition for the term "all-natural." Therefore, it could be used on a pack of Twinkies and still be legal. Just try not to fall for these traps and just flip the package over for the actual nutrition facts. It is, however, illegal to lie on those, so they'll be nothing but cold, hard facts (but still, beware of deceptive portioning on the nutrition facts. Sometimes bad food companies will put ridiculously small serving sizes on the package to make the sugars and fats seem lower than they really are). Go for the high fiber, low sugar and low-calorie choices. Also, think fresh: baby carrots are my go-to snack!

**9. Go low sugar**

I can't stress it enough. Sugar can be destructive and do horrible things to your body. By "sugar," really I mean high fructose corn syrup, Xantham gum, all the different ways of putting crap into food products that's cheaper than real sugar. However, some sugars can be good for you, like the natural sugars found in fruit. That fructose actually can deliver some good stuff for you that will help create energy for you. Stay away from added sugars as much as you can, and try to stick with natural sugar.

**10. Listen to your doctor!!!**

Yes, he does make sense sometimes. It is actually really important to get your daily amount of fruits, veggies, grains -- you know, the whole nine yards. Together, they will deliver pretty much everything on this list that's good for you. It seems hard, I know. I used to hate vegetables (like, seriously, hate them), but eventually over time I grew used to them. I started getting them a lot more when I discovered V8 V-Fusion, a fruit-vegetable hybrid juice that contains all the good vegetables, covered by the delicious taste of fruit (which also provide nutritional value). It really is perfect for people like me who like fruit way more than vegetables, but still feel they should eat them daily.

Join me in building a healthy future!

1. DO YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF TO BE HEALTHY? WHY OR WHY NOT?
2. WHICH OF THESE TIPS DO YOU FOLLOW REGULARLY?
3. WHICH DO YOU NOT FOLLOW REGULARLY?
4. WHAT WOULD YOU ADD TO THE LIST OF TIPS?
5. WHAT DO YOU THINK IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING YOU SHOULD DO EVERY DAY TO BE HEALTHY?
6. ACCORDING TO YOUR CURRENT HEALTH HABITS, HOW HEALTHY DO YOU SEE YOURSELF IN 10 YEARS? WHAT DO YOU NEED TO CHANGE OR KEEP THE SAME?