

How can my community help?

Teens spend a lot of time at school. Healthy eating and physical activity play important roles in learning.

As a parent, you can help your teen's school support healthy eating and physical activity. Here are some ideas:

- **Healthy snacks available at school**

Most school leaders know that everyone loves to snack. Many snack foods are high in fat and sugar. Chips, doughnuts, cakes, candy, and soda are okay to eat sometimes, but it's also nice to have healthier choices like pretzels or fruit. Schools can require that vending machines and snack bars offer some healthy choices. Teens who are looking for a healthy snack at school can then find one.

- **School and community spaces for physical activity**

Many teens do not have a good space to be physically active. They might not feel safe in their neighborhood or they may not have parks or gyms nearby. Schools and neighborhood spaces (like gyms, fields, pools, and courts) can be open to teens on weekends, evenings, and during school vacations.

- **Promote healthy foods**

If the schools offered and promoted healthy foods with eye-catching packages and lower prices, more students might make a healthy choice.

What can I do?

As a parent, you care deeply about your kids. Here are some things you can do to help.

- Call the food service director and encourage him/her to sell healthy foods that students like to eat.
- Work with your school's parent organization to increase healthy food and physical activity options at school.
- Encourage the sale of healthy foods at sporting events, parties, and fundraisers.
- Talk to the PE teacher about physical activities available after school.
- Talk or write to the school principal and district superintendent about the food or physical activity issues that concern you.
- Talk with your teen about things they can do to make their school a healthier place.

For more information about healthy eating, physical activity, and how you can make your community a healthier place, contact:

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California Project LEAN, P.O. Box 942732, MS-675, Sacramento, CA 94234-7320, 916/323-4742; Fax 916/445-7571, www.dhs.ca.gov/lean



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hese days, everyone agrees that healthy eating and physical activity are important. But are they important for teenagers? Yes! Healthy eating and physical activity have a positive impact on some of the most important factors of teen life:

- Learning
- Feeling and looking good
- Confidence
- Energy level and motivation
- Staying out of trouble

Raising a teenager can be hard work. Here are some questions that parents often ask.

Why don't teens choose healthy foods and do physical activity?

Some of the reasons might surprise you:

- Many teens don't know which foods are healthy.
- Healthy food choices are not always available or promoted at school and where teens hang out.
- Teens don't always like the physical activity choices that are available.
- Many teens don't feel safe being physically active in their neighborhood.

My teen only wants "junk" food and "fast" food. What can I do?

- **Buy lowfat snacks:**

TRY:	INSTEAD OF:
• Baked corn chips, baked potato chips, and pretzels	• Regular corn chips, potato chips
• Salsa	• Sour cream dips
• Reduced fat or lowfat ice cream	• Ice cream
• Fruit smoothies	• Milk shakes

- **Eat dinner together.** Try these quick and easy ideas as part of a healthy dinner:
 - Lowfat bean and cheese burritos
 - Pasta with tomato sauce and a salad
 - Quesadillas with lowfat cheese and chicken
 - Vegetable soup with whole grain bread
- **Make breakfast hard to refuse.** Stock your kitchen with fast and healthy foods that can be combined for a healthy breakfast:
 - Fruit
 - Lowfat yogurt
 - Low sugar cereals
 - Lowfat or fat free milk
 - Bagels
 - Tortillas
 - Lowfat frozen waffles

- **Make smart fast food choices.** Choose healthy options like:
 - Small regular burgers, instead of large specialty burgers
 - Grilled chicken sandwiches
 - Barbeque sauce instead of mayonnaise
 - Lowfat salad dressings

How can I get my teenager off the couch ?

- Ask your teen about the physical activities they like to do.
- Be a role model. Let your teen see you doing physical activity regularly.
- Plan family events that include physical activities like walking or bike riding.
- Provide teens with transportation to safe places for physical activity.
- Reward your teen for doing physical chores like mowing the lawn or vacuuming.
- Limit television and video game time.
- Be creative. If your teen does not like the usual competitive sports, suggest activities like dance, karate and swimming.
- Remember that almost any type of movement can make your teen healthier.