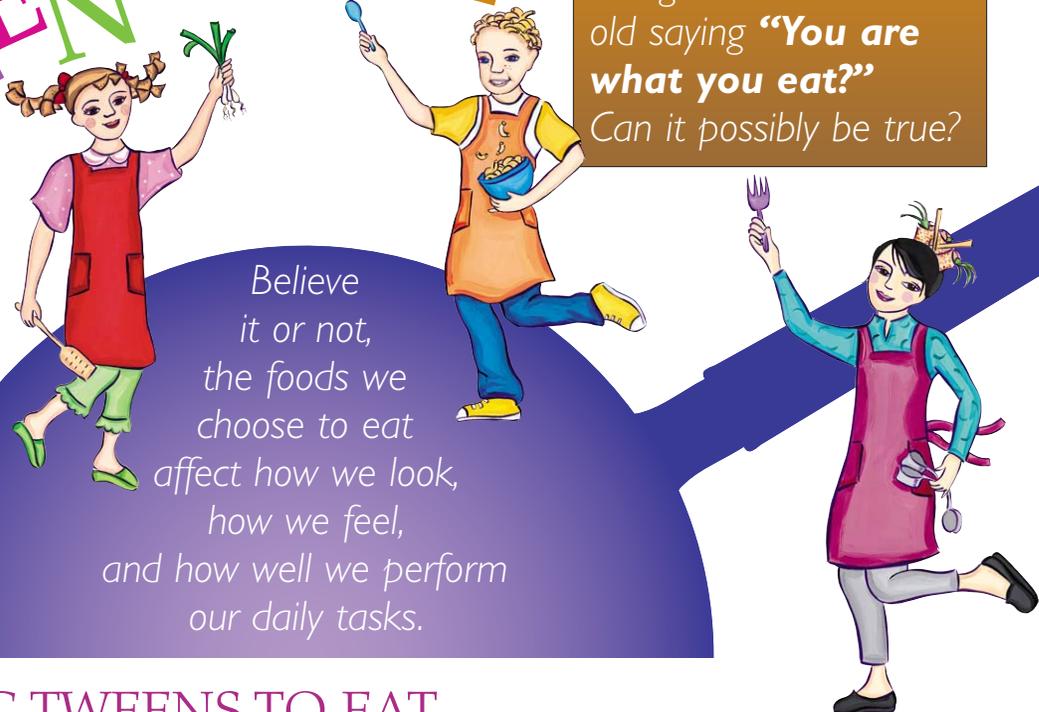


# THE TWEEN SCENE

Have you ever really thought about the old saying **“You are what you eat?”** Can it possibly be true?



Believe it or not, the foods we choose to eat affect how we look, how we feel, and how well we perform our daily tasks.

## ENCOURAGING TWEENS TO EAT A BALANCED DIET WILL LAY THE FOUNDATION FOR THEIR LIFELONG GOOD HEALTH.

### WHAT'S HAPPENING?

Growing taller, building lean body mass, exerting independence — the tween's body and mind are very busy. Eight- to 12-year-olds are growing and changing physically and emotionally. A balanced diet will help maximize their physical and intellectual potential.

#### Help them start eating smart!

No one food provides all the nutrients the body needs. To help children eat smart, emphasize balance, variety and moderation. Remember, **all foods can be part of a healthful diet!** Let's take a look at just a few of the many nutrients a growing body needs every day.

**Carbohydrates** are the body's main source of energy. Encourage tweens to eat complex carbohydrates, like whole grains, fruits and vegetables every day. In addition to energy, complex carbohydrates provide the body with fiber and a variety of essential vitamins and minerals.

While simple carbohydrates, like candy and soda pop, are a fun part of the tween lifestyle, they are low in essential nutrients. Teach tweens to enjoy these treats in moderation after they've chosen more nutrient-rich foods from all the food groups.

**Fat** is another great energy source for the body. That's right! Fat is essential to the human body, and we need to eat a moderate amount every day. It helps transport some vitamins, protects vital organs and keeps skin and hair looking healthy. Educate children on the important role fat plays in good health. And, be sure they include some fat in their diet every day.

Along with carbohydrates and fats, **protein** can be a source of energy for active bodies. Protein's primary functions are building and repairing body tissues, like muscles and organs; supporting the immune system; and helping move vitamins, minerals and other nutrients throughout the body. Beef, eggs, pork, fish, poultry and beans are all good sources of protein.

Every body needs **calcium** for strong bones and beautiful teeth. As most bone growth and development occurs during the teenage years, it is essential to eat foods high in calcium during this time. Ensure that tweens eat two to three servings of calcium-rich foods every day. Dairy products like milk, yogurt and cheese are great sources.

What about the child that appears sluggish and tired all the time? If youth don't get enough iron, zinc and B-vitamins, they won't have enough energy to perform well in school, shine on the practice field, or even hang out with friends.

**Iron** carries oxygen to body tissues where it helps produce energy, supports the immune system and aids in brain development. Research has shown that even mild, short-term iron deficiency affects academic performance.<sup>1</sup>

Iron is particularly crucial for young girls. Some of the best food sources of iron are lean beef and pork, enriched breads and cereals, and beans. To perform their best, tweens should eat a variety of high-iron foods.

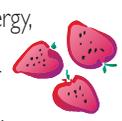
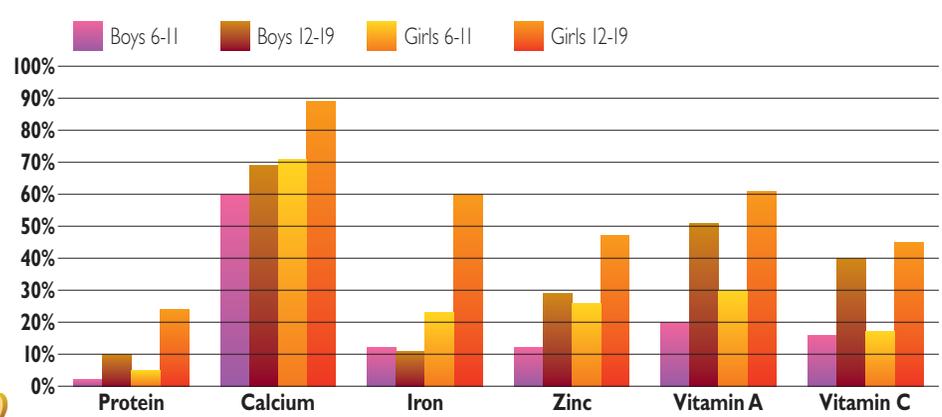
**Zinc** supports the immune system and is essential for growth, development and sexual maturation. Studies suggest that zinc deficiency during the early years adversely affects cognitive behavior, including attention, short-term memory and problem-solving.<sup>2</sup> Some of the best food sources are lean beef, wheat bran, milk and nuts.

**B-vitamins**, found in enriched grain products, green leafy vegetables and lean meats, like beef, pork and poultry, help unleash the energy in food.

So, choosing foods with iron, zinc and B-vitamins can help give tweens the energy to get through practice and the brain power to do well in the classroom — now that's teaching them to eat smart!

Antioxidants, like **vitamins A, C and E**, help maintain good health by “cleaning up” damaging free radicals in the body. They also help keep skin and gums healthy. Be sure tweens eat their fruits and veggies, at least 3½ cups each day.

Percentage of Girls and Boys NOT Meeting Recommended Amounts of Important Nutrients<sup>3</sup>



## Helping them eat right on the go?

Most tweens have very busy schedules. School, friends, extracurricular activities and family are most often higher priorities than “smart eating.” **Food is the fuel that enables tweens to go the extra distance.** Imagine trying to start a car engine without gas. Just like a car, the human body requires fuel to get going — physically and mentally.

## How to eat right on the run?

### • Start every day with breakfast.

Even on the busiest of mornings, offer them a cereal bar or a peanut butter and jelly sandwich with a glass of milk and juice.

• In fast food restaurants and school cafeterias, encourage them to select grilled items and watch intake of fried foods. On days when only french fries will satisfy their appetites, urge them to choose the small serving. For a meal packed with the nutrients needed to power the most active youngster through a busy day, pair a grilled burger with a side salad, a fruit cup and milk.

• Grabbing meals and snacks from vending machines or convenience stores? Try milk or juice with a piece of beef jerky or grab-and-go veggies and lowfat dip.

• Getting too hungry between meals can lead to overeating, so **snacks can be healthful.** Make nutritious snacks readily available. They provide key nutrients children may miss at meals. Have fresh fruit or sliced veggies ready to eat when they get home from school. For a real nutrient lift, wrap lean beef in a whole-wheat tortilla with colorful veggies like bell peppers and dark leafy greens.

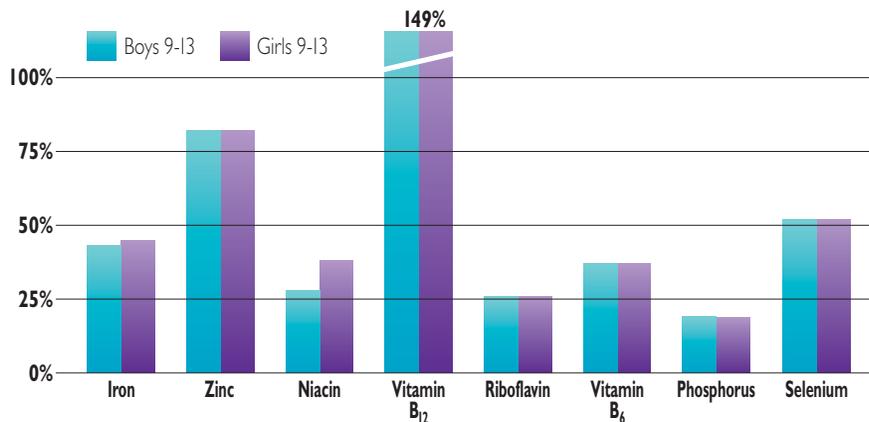
• Satisfy their sweet tooth with a yogurt and fruit parfait. They'll get much needed calcium and protein and still enjoy a great taste.

## What's the fitness connection?

Feeling strong is the foundation of looking healthy, **so tweens need to get their bodies moving.**

Encourage them to get involved with an athletic program. It's a great way to burn energy, meet new friends and show some team spirit. Team sports not their thing? No problem! How about inline skating or bike-riding? Families can go swimming together or take walks after dinner. Besides being great exercise, walks provide family sharing time. In addition, innovative programs — karate, dancing, hiking, kick-boxing — are available through local community centers. Urge tweens to try something new, and remember, **anything that gets them moving counts!**

## Percentage of Estimated Average Requirement for Boys and Girls 9-13 Contributed by a 3-ounce serving of Lean Beef<sup>4,5</sup>



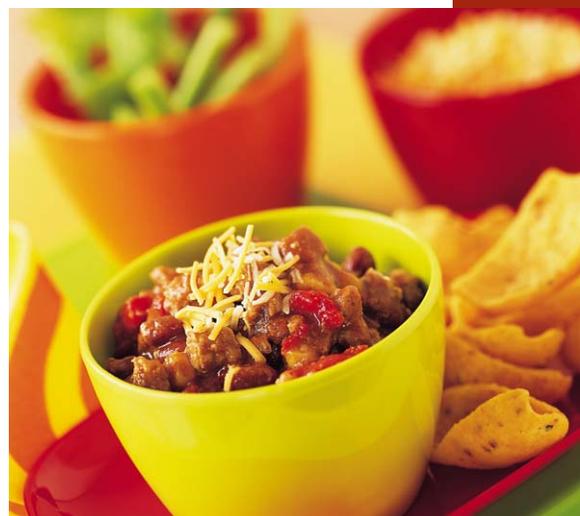
## Focus on Fitness

- Being active helps tweens reach, and maintain, a healthy weight.
- Active bodies release “feel good” hormones that can help reduce anxiety, improve mood and promote relaxation.
- In addition to a calcium-rich diet, regular weight-bearing exercise, like walking or jogging, is essential for the development and maintenance of strong healthy bones.

## What should your child's body look like?

**Tween bodies come in all shapes and sizes.** During these years, body changes are rapid. The psychological impact of so many emotional and physical changes can trigger extreme responses. For instance, some may overeat while some others tend toward disordered eating. Adults can help them achieve healthy self-esteem and body image by focusing on the importance of physical activity and a balanced diet, including all food groups. Be alert to extreme behaviors, such as excessive dieting, eliminating foods or food groups from their diets, over-exercising, or, on the contrary, an unusually sedentary lifestyle by spending too much time on the couch or in front of the computer or TV.

*Remember — it's not just about encouraging. You're a **role model** too! Set an example by eating smart and being active.*



## Chili Beef Express

Total preparation and cooking time: 15 minutes

- 1 package (12 ounces) frozen fully-cooked ground beef crumbles
- 1 can (15 ounces) chili hot beans in chili sauce, undrained
- 1 can (14½ ounces) chili-style chunky tomatoes, undrained
- 1 cup frozen corn
- ¼ teaspoon pepper

### Toppings:

- Shredded Mexican cheese blend
- Sour cream

1. Combine ground beef crumbles, beans, tomatoes, corn and pepper in large nonstick skillet. Bring to a boil over medium heat.
2. Reduce heat to medium-low; cover and simmer 10 minutes. Sprinkle with cheese and/or add sour cream before serving.

Makes 4 servings (about 1¼ cups each).

**Nutrition information per serving, excluding toppings: 367 calories; 28 g protein; 33 g carbohydrate; 15 g fat; 1,323 mg sodium; 60 mg cholesterol; 4.8 mg niacin; 0.3 mg vitamin B<sub>6</sub>; 1.9 mcg vitamin B<sub>12</sub>; 4.4 mg iron; 4.6 mg zinc.**

**This recipe is an excellent source of protein, niacin, vitamin B<sub>12</sub>, iron and zinc and a good source of vitamin B<sub>6</sub>.**

### Footnotes:

1. Pollitt, E. Iron deficiency and cognitive function. *Ann. Rev. Nutr.* 13: 521-537;1993.
2. Golub, M.S.; Keen, C.L.; Gershwin, M.E.; Hendricks, A.G. Developmental zinc deficiency and behavior. *J. Nutr.* 125 (supp): 2263s-2271s; 1995.
3. Updated Analysis of the 1994-96, 1998 Continuing Survey of Food Intake by Individuals (CSFII), Final report prepared by Bermudez Consultenos International, August, 2002.
4. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Research Service, 2006 USDA Nutrient Database for Standard Reference, Release 19.
5. Institute of Medicine, Food and Nutrition Board

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