

Nutritional Goals in Teens

Adolescence is a critical period of growth and development, where proper nutrition is essential for supporting rapid physical changes, hormonal shifts, and cognitive development.

1. Adequate Energy Intake

Teens experience rapid growth spurts and increased physical activity, making sufficient caloric intake crucial. Energy needs vary based on age, gender, and activity level.

Age-Specific Energy Needs for Teens

- **Ages 12-14 (Early Adolescence)**

Girls: 1,600 to 2,200 calories/day

Boys: 1,800 to 2,600 calories/day

- **Ages 15-17 (Mid-Adolescence)**

Girls: 1,800 to 2,400 calories/day

Boys: 2,200 to 3,200 calories/day

- **Ages 18-19 (Late Adolescence)**

Girls: 2,000 to 2,400 calories/day

Boys: 2,400 to 3,200 calories/day

2. Balanced Macronutrient Intake

- **Proteins:** Vital for muscle development, tissue repair, and overall growth. Teens need approximately **10-30%** of their daily calories from protein sources like lean meats, poultry, fish, eggs, dairy, legumes, and plant-based options.
- **Carbohydrates:** The primary source of energy for teens, especially for fueling brain function and physical activities. Carbohydrates should make up **45-65%** of daily caloric intake.
- **Fats:** Essential for hormone production, brain development, and energy.. Fat should account for **25-35%** of daily calories.

3. Micronutrient Needs

Teens need an adequate intake of vitamins and minerals to support their growth and hormonal changes.

- **Calcium:** Critical for bone development, teens need **1,300 mg/day** to build peak bone mass and prevent future osteoporosis. Sources include dairy, fortified plant-based milk, and leafy greens.



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- **Iron:** Especially important for teenage girls due to menstruation. Iron helps transport oxygen in the blood, and teens need **11-15 mg/day**. Sources include red meat, poultry, fish, beans, and fortified cereals.
- **Vitamin D:** Helps with calcium absorption and bone health. Teens require **600 IU/day**, which can come from fortified foods, sunlight exposure, and fatty fish.

4. Hydration

Water is vital for maintaining hydration, especially during increased physical activity.

5. Promote Healthy Eating Habits

- **Regular Meals:** Encourage three balanced meals and healthy snacks throughout the day to avoid overeating and maintain consistent energy levels.
- **Reduce Processed Foods:** Minimize the intake of processed snacks, fast food, and sugary treats that are high in unhealthy fats, sodium, and sugar.
- **Healthy Snacks:** Promote snacks like fruits, vegetables, nuts, yogurt, and whole grains to provide lasting energy and essential nutrients.

6. Special Considerations

- **Body Image and Weight Concerns:** Teens often face societal pressures regarding body image. It's important to promote a balanced, non-restrictive approach to eating and physical activity, rather than focusing on diets or extreme weight control measures.
- **Physical Activity:** Ensure teens stay physically active, as exercise supports muscle growth, bone health, and mental well-being. Aim for at least **60 minutes** of moderate to vigorous physical activity daily.

