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Balanced nutrition for adolescents!

Adolescence is a period of rapid growth and development. Eating a balanced and varied diet, while keeping active will help to ensure you are healthy and strong!

The aim is for you to develop healthy eating and lifestyle habits that will see you through into adulthood!

Enjoy physical activity

Young people should try and do at 60 minutes of physical activity a day, ranging between moderate (e.g. walking or cycling) and vigorous activity (e.g. running or football). It isn't just organised activities that count though, as other activities that could be part of your daily routine count too, such as walking or cycling to school or college. This time can be a great opportunity to join a club if you like team sports, which is also a great way to meet new friends.

Body image and diet

This is also a time in your life when you might become more aware of your own body and feel pressure from your friends, peers and the media to look a certain way. The pressure can lead some teens to exercise excessively, skip meals and follow unnecessary weight loss diets, which in extreme cases can lead to eating disorders such as bulimia and anorexia nervosa. **If you do feel worried about your body, do talk to your parents who can ensure you get the support and reassurance you need.**

People come in all different shapes and sizes, and by eating a healthy, varied diet and taking part in physical activity then you will be a healthy weight!

Skipping meals doesn't help either as this can leave you feeling so hungry that all you can think about is food!
Eating breakfast has also been linked to improved concentration at school and better exam performance!



If you are worried about your weight, don't be tempted to follow one of the popular 'fad' or 'crash' diets (diets that seriously limit the amount of food you can eat or ban food groups from the diet completely). They can also make you feel unwell as they can leave the body lacking in energy and a number of important nutrients. These diets can also have other unpleasant side effects, for example, cutting out all carbohydrates can leave you feeling tired and irritable.

Breakfast is an important meal

Include a protein rich food in the form of

YOGURT CHEESE
NUTS EGGS MILK

to help keep your energy levels stable during the morning.



Ideas for breakfast

Wholegrain toast with cheese or peanut butter. 1 natural yoghurt and a piece of fruit. A bowl of cereal (not too sugary!) with milk and an apple or banana; Porridge with chopped banana and a handful of blueberries or dried fruit; Boiled egg and toast and a fruit smoothie.

Healthy Eating tips for older children and teenagers!

Eat three meals a day; breakfast, lunch and supper with snacks as necessary.

Make sure each meal includes at least one portion of fruit or vegetables (they contain lots of vitamins and minerals) and a portion of starchy foods such as whole wheat pasta, whole meal bread or potatoes and some protein such as meat, fish or vegetable alternatives.

Make sure that you eat at least five portions of fruit and vegetables every day (fresh, frozen, canned and dried all count).

Limit how much fast food you eat.

These foods can be high in fat, salt and/or sugars, which can be bad for our health when eaten in large amounts. Enjoying fast food once or twice a week is fine!

Snack Sensibly.

If you are hungry between meals, go for healthier snack choices such as:

Fruit (fresh or dried), unsalted nuts, natural yoghurt, savoury biscuits, whole meal bread with cheese, hummus or nut butters

Essential minerals for adolescents

Boost your iron!

It is important to eat plenty of foods containing iron, especially for girls who lose iron when they have their period. Iron is important for making red blood cells, which carry oxygen around the body. Almost 50% of teenage girls do not get enough iron in their diet.

Sources of iron include:



- Red meat and liver;
- Wholegrains (e.g. whole meal bread);
- Iron-fortified breakfast cereals;
- Dark green vegetables (e.g. kale, watercress);
- Beans (e.g. red kidney beans, chickpeas);
- Dried fruits (e.g. figs, raisins) and seeds

Build up your bones!

As teenagers, you need high amounts of calcium because your bones are growing in size and density. The exact age at which the amount of bone tissue in the skeleton (known as bone mass) peaks is unclear, but it normally happens between the ages of 18-25 years, when bones reach their maximum strength and density. At least 90 percent of peak bone mass is acquired by the time you reach the end of your teenage years, which makes youth the best time to "invest" in your bone health

The best sources of calcium include:

- Dairy products such as milk, yogurt and cheese;
- White and brown bread (as in the UK, calcium is added to flour by law);
- Calcium-fortified dairy alternatives, such as those made from soya (very important if you are vegan or don't eat dairy products);
- Calcium-fortified breakfast cereals;
- Dark green vegetables (e.g. kale, rocket and watercress);
- Fish that is eaten with the bones (e.g. whitebait, canned sardines or canned salmon)

