

Breakfast, lunch, and in between

9....10....11....12

Self-reliance builds self-esteem.

Most tweens are ready, willing, and able to prepare some of their own food. Prepping their own breakfast and/or lunch in the evening provides them with opportunities to practice meal planning and time management.

Help them plan to include whole grains, protein, veggies and/or fruit, and milk (dairy or non-dairy). Here are some combos that are perfect for hungry beginning cooks!

Breakfast

- Microwave scrambled eggs with cheese wrapped in a tortilla
- Oatmeal topped with fruit and nuts
- Banana bread with cream cheese
- Greek yogurt with fruit and nuts
- Bagel, cream cheese, smoked fish and sliced tomato
- Graham crackers with nut spread and cinnamon
- Toasted ham and cheese
- Whole wheat tortilla with nut butter wrapped around a banana
- Fruit smoothie (yogurt, milk & fruit)

Lunch

- Sandwiches or wraps
- Pasta or chef salad
- Tortilla pinwheels with smoked fish and cream cheese
- Tacos
- Celery sticks with peanut butter
- Cheese and crackers
- Cottage cheese with cherry tomatoes
- Hummus and veggies
- Left-overs from supper :-)

Planning and shopping together is a great time to talk about healthy eating. For more information, visit: www.jillcastle.com. She's a childhood nutrition expert and a mom!

Tweens

No longer little kids, but not big just yet....

Since at least the 1930's, there's been a word for the stage of life that straddles childhood and adolescence - the "tween" years.



As kids this age approach puberty, the whole family may have uncertainty about what's in store and how to prepare.

Here are some suggestions that can make the transition easier.

The need for good nutrition, physical activity, and plenty of sleep will never change, no matter a person's age. When these foundational physical requirements are met, bodies and minds both feel and function better.

Make sure your tween:

- ✓ **Is physically active.** Being on a sports team can be a great way to do this, but it's not the only way. What's most important is that your child is getting at least an hour of moderate to vigorous activity every day.
- ✓ **Gets enough rest.** Sleep deprivation isn't just a problem for adults. Tweens need from 9 - 11 hours of sleep each night. Smart phones, TV, and caffeine can all interfere with sleep, leading to cranky kids that struggle in their day.
- ✓ **Eats a balanced diet** that includes veggies, whole grains, fruits, and some protein while minimizing sugar and junk food.

Plan for a healthy "media diet" as well.

Just like a steady diet of junk food can harm growing bodies, a steady diet of junk media can

harm growing minds and hearts. Quantity and quality are both important factors for parents to consider when setting up rules around time spent "plugged in." Tweens in the U.S. average almost 6 hours a day of screen time, and most of that is passive consumption. Visit www.healthychildren.org/English/news/Pages/Managing-Media-We-Need-a-Plan.aspx and www.common sense media.org for help in planning your tween's media diet.

Talk about puberty. For some kids it will come early, for some it'll come later, but it's coming. Talk about both their current stage of development as well as the next stages. When kids know what to expect, they feel more prepared. When they know that they can turn to you for calm understanding and support, they'll be more likely to do just that. SMC has an informative hand-out to help with your discussion. www.sawtoothmountainclinic.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Athletic-Physicals-Puberty-.pdf

While you're at it, talk about sex and drugs, too. Tweens are starting to think about how they'll handle drinking, drugs, and relationships, and they're listening to what you say and watching what you do. Discuss your values and ask about theirs. This can be a great opportunity to build trust and closeness. Here's a resource for these and other difficult discussions: <https://www.childrennow.org/parenting-resources//sex.html>

Taking care of ourselves
can take a lot of support.
We're here to help!
Ask a nurse or provider if
you'd like to talk.

Handling Bullies

Bullying may be common, but that doesn't make it okay.

The tween years are the most common time for bullying to happen. Bullying can do lasting damage to the child that's being bullied, and to the child that's doing the bullying, and even to other children that witness the bullying.

There are generally four types of bullying:

- Physical - hitting, kicking, pushing...
- Verbal - taunting, teasing, or threatening harm
- Relational - excluding someone or spreading rumors
- Property - damaging someone's belongings

There isn't one profile for bullies or bullying behavior: both boys and girls can engage in any of the behaviors and both well-connected or isolated kids can be bullies.

Bullies typically target children that cry, get mad, or easily give in. They bully to have power over another child, and use fear and intimidation to gain that power. Bullying most often happens when adults aren't watching, but other children are. This gives the bully an audience and helps cement their sense of power. At school, this can mean that hallways, lunchrooms, bathrooms, or playgrounds. Outside of school, this can mean going to or from school, at extra-curricular activities, in the neighborhood, at church, or via cell phones or online.

Bullying is often a "pack" phenomenon, where groups of kids support each other in bullying other students. It's possible for a child to both be a bully and a victim of bullying.

Unfortunately only 20 - 30% of students that are bullied report it to an adult. When they do, adults don't always believe them, because they're not seeing it happen. If adults do witness it, they don't always know how to respond.

Adults can help prevent bullying from every getting started by being approachable and caring, supportive of kids as they pursue their interests, modeling kindness and respect, and encourage them to get help when they're involved in or witnessing bullying. The most effective prevention programs involve the whole school community (students, families, administrators, teachers, and staff) creating a respectful culture. Zero tolerance and expulsion aren't effective strategies. Bystander intervention on behalf of a young person can be hugely impactful.

For more information, visit:

<https://www.stopbullying.gov>

<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/safety-prevention/at-play/Pages/Bullying-Its-Not-Ok.aspx>

Testing Limits

"Pushing the envelope" of parental and societal rules is a normal part of growing up, and it actually serves a developmental purpose. By testing boundaries, kids learn about where other people's identities stop and their own identities begin; they can experiment with expressing that individuality, and feel a sense of autonomy at the same time they're learning about their own self-control. They have to test the boundaries to know where the boundaries are.

But sometimes normal, healthy "limit testing" morphs into chronic disobedience. Unhealthy patterns can develop in the ways that adults and kids interact. The causes of disobedience can be many. Are parental expectations unreasonable for that particular child's situation or capabilities? Are there problems at school? Is the family going through a stressful time? Is there conflict between the child's parents?

If your child's behavior has become chronically disobedient, here are some questions that can help you figure out if there is a connection between that behavior and your family's situation.

- Do family members show respect for each other's privacy, ideas, values, and personal property?
- When there's a disagreement, is it discussed rationally and kindly, or do people argue or become mean/violent?
- Are children punished by spanking, yelling, or shaming?
- Do you and your child have very different personalities and ways of being that are causing friction?
- Is your family going through especially stressful times?

Your response to your child's challenging behaviors can either calm things down or make things worse. If you model calmness and respect for self and others, your child has to face his/her own behavior, instead of turning the focus to your anger. When your child does his/her best to calm down and respond with respect, let her/him know that you've noticed and how much you appreciate it.

There may come a time when you need to call in outside resources:

- If the disobedience becomes a persistent pattern, both at home and at school.
- If it is coupled with aggressiveness or destructiveness.
- If you also see signs of deep sadness, or hear talk about loneliness or even suicide.
- If your family has developed habits of responding to disagreements by lashing out and being physically or emotionally violent.
- If anyone in the family is using drugs or alcohol to try and cope with the stress.

For more information, visit www.healthychildren.org
Sawtooth Mountain Clinic has Behavioral Health Consultants on staff that can help you and your family.

www.sawtoothmountainclinic.org/our-clinic/our-programs/behavioral-health/