

HEALTHY TEENAGERS

Girls start to grow at ten years old. By the time they are twelve their growth reaches a peak of 10.5cms per year. This growth stops at around fifteen years old, by which time they have grown about 25cms. During puberty girls can expect to gain around 8.5kgs per year.

Boys start to grow at twelve years. By the time they are fourteen their growth reaches a peak of 12cms per year. This growth stops around seventeen years old by which time they have grown about 28cms. During puberty boys can expect to gain around 9.5kgs per year.

The growth rate of teenagers varies; some remaining small while others shoot up while still quite young. Both situations are normal and it is useful to reassure teenagers who are slow in growing that it will take place in its own good time.

This is a time to encourage healthy eating patterns to facilitate bone strength, good clear skin, and maximum height.

Hopefully by this age the teenagers have developed a taste for the healthy food they have been eating all their lives, but this is also a time when young people have their own money and tend to eat away from home more and often make poor food choices. Add this to the fact that all that growing is very hungry work!

Where possible continue to provide healthy food for your child. A good breakfast sets them up for the day and keeps them feeling mentally alert. Choices can be cereal, but be sure it is a quality cereal rather than a heavily sweetened one, with some fruit. Eggs are tasty and filling with some wholegrain toast. Toast with ham, cheese and tomato, food with as many nutrients as possible.

Pack a lunch and snacks including fruit and if your kids like something sweet choose raisin bread, fruit buns or low fat muesli bars. Always add a bottle of water. If your children don't like sandwiches or rolls, try sending a container of pasta salad with tuna, or some meat and salad items with some crispbreads.

It is important to encourage your children to stay away from high sugar foods such as fizzy drinks and energy drinks, especially those with guarana, a high caffeine additive which leads to jitters. Plain water is best and very important for clear skin and healthy bowel function.

Dinner is still mainly eaten at home and so you as the cook still can exert some level of control.

Some healthy choices for eating away from home include

Vegetarian pizza

Kebabs

Sushi

Noodles with some meat and vegetables

Stir fry and rice

Plain hamburgers or chicken burgers.

Bad choices are all the deep fried foods and pastry foods such as pies and sausage rolls. Donuts, chips, crisps, icecream, lollies, biscuits, and chocolate are all best saved for special occasion treats.

Should you give your growing teenager vitamins? Yes, I think so. A good B Complex is useful to cope with the stress of school, work, life and growing. Zinc is wonderful for the skin and to improve immune function.

Finally, it is very hard to get teenagers to go to bed early enough to get enough sleep, but it is extremely important and makes a world of difference to how well a teenager feels.