

## Nutrition for Your Preteen: Ages 9 through 12 Years

Children ages 9 through 12 years old, often referred to as preteens (or tweens), begin to show signs of puberty. The changes occur at different ages and rates. Weight gain of 10 pounds or more per year during puberty is normal and Body Mass Index (BMI) should generally stay within the normal range.

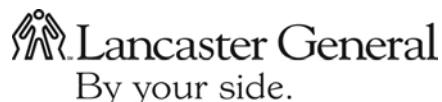
### Nutritional needs:

Preteens vary widely in their calorie needs, depending on age, gender, and physical activity level:

- *Female needs range from 1400-1800 calories (9 year olds) to 1600-2200 calories (12 year olds).*
- *Male needs range from 1600-2000 calories (9 year olds) to 1800-2400 calories (12 year olds).*

The guidelines below list the types and amounts of foods that provide ~ 1400 calories (lower end of range) to ~ 2400 calories (higher end of range). These are general guidelines only.

Food Group	Daily Goal	Tip
<b>Grains:</b>	5 to 8 ounce equivalents (1 ounce equivalent = 1 slice bread; ½ cup cooked cereal, rice, pasta; ¾ to 1 cup ready-to-eat low sugar cereal)	Offer whole grains half the time Examples: whole wheat bread, whole grain pasta, brown rice, oatmeal, whole grain barley, whole grain wheat flakes cereal
<b>Vegetables</b>	1-½ to 3 cups	Offer a variety of colors and types of vegetables daily
<b>Fruits</b>	1-½ to 2 cups (½ cup dried fruit = 1 cup fruit)	Make most choices fruit, not juice, preferably unsweetened
<b>Milk</b>	2 to 3 cups (1 cup yogurt or 1-½ ounces cheese = 1 cup milk)	Offer fat free or low fat types most often
<b>Meats and Beans</b>	4 to 6.5 ounce equivalents (1 ounce equivalent = 1 ounce cooked fish, seafood, skinless poultry, lean beef and pork; 1 egg; 1 Tbsp. peanut butter; ¼ c. cooked dried beans)	Offer a variety of choices each week
<b>Oils</b>	4 to 7 teaspoons	Best sources are fatty fish, nuts, seeds, cooking oil (like canola, olive, and soybean oil)
<b>Extra calories</b>	170-360 calories	Best sources are extra foods from the 5 main food groups; limit added sugars
<b>Water</b>		Preferred over sweetened drinks



## Tips for helping your preteen eat healthy:

- Continue to maintain a “Division of Responsibility” in regard to feeding, but realize that as preteens mature, they can learn to take on more responsibility for *what to eat*.<sup>2</sup>
  - *Parents* are responsible for *what* foods and beverages are brought into the home, what foods are on- or off-limits for snacks, and what foods are served for family meals.
  - *Preteens* are responsible for *whether* to eat and *how much* to eat. They can decide what to eat for snacks and for meals outside the home (like at school or at a friend’s home).
- At home, encourage eating at the kitchen or dining room table; limit eating in other rooms of the house and while watching TV.
- Have family meals and keep mealtimes pleasant. Turn off the TV so you can enjoy being together. Ask your preteen what he’s learning in school about healthy habits and talk about it.
- Have your preteen help you plan menus, grocery shop, choose new foods, find healthy recipes, and cook. Plan to try new foods initially as “side dishes” along with familiar foods.
- Teach your preteen how to make simple snacks and meals, like fruit smoothies, sandwiches, and salads. Teach basic cooking skills and safe food handling, skills that will help him become a responsible adult. Supervise your preteen, as needed, when he uses kitchen appliances.
- Help your preteen start her day with a healthy breakfast which includes foods from at least 3 main food groups. Together, create and post a list of breakfast ideas as a handy reference. Do the same for snacks and packed lunch ideas. If your preteen needs an energy boost for after school sports activities, remind your tween to pack a nonperishable snack, like homemade trail mix.
- Keep plenty of high calcium foods and beverages on hand; encourage your preteen to aim for at least “3 a day,” that is, 3 servings a day of dairy or other calcium-rich foods to meet their needs:
  - *9-12 years old need 1300 mg calcium and \*200 IU Vitamin D (\*if limited sun exposure) daily*Good calcium sources: dairy foods (choose low fat or fat free types most often: milk, yogurt, cheese); *calcium-fortified* soymilk, orange juice, cereal, and tofu; salmon canned with bones (mash and eat for the calcium), sardines, collard greens, kale, bok choy, broccoli, soybeans, oranges
- Encourage iron-rich foods to meet the increased needs for menstruating females (to replace iron loss in blood) and for males (as their muscle mass develops). Good iron sources: beef and pork (choose lean cuts - round and loin), shellfish, skinless poultry, fish, iron-fortified cereals and breads, tofu, legumes, dried fruits, dark green vegetables. Vitamin C (found in many fruits and vegetables) enhances the absorption of iron from plant food sources.
- Watch for signs of an eating disorder: extreme concern or fear about body weight and shape, refusal to eat, excessive exercising, laxative abuse, bingeing (out of control eating), vomiting after meals. If you have any concerns about your preteen, seek professional help.
- Be a positive role model. If you eat and enjoy a well-balanced diet, try new foods, use polite table manners, and practice healthy eating habits, chances are that your preteen will do the same.
- Advocate for healthy foods served at school and extracurricular activities and sold for fundraisers.

### References and resources:

1. MyPyramid: [www.mypyramid.gov](http://www.mypyramid.gov). Other government-sponsored nutrition information: [www.nutrition.gov](http://www.nutrition.gov)
2. KidsHealth Web site: [www.KidsHealth.org](http://www.KidsHealth.org)
3. Fruits and Veggies More Matter™ National Campaign Web sites: [www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org](http://www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org) and [www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov](http://www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov)
4. 3 A Day™ of Dairy program Web site: [www.3aday.org](http://www.3aday.org)
5. Pennsylvania Advocates for Nutrition and Activity (PANA) Web site: [www.panaonline.org](http://www.panaonline.org)