



HEALTHY LIVING FOR TEENS

PART 1

Living Healthy to Stay on Top of Your Game

Let's face it, being a teenager sometimes isn't easy. You've got to juggle school, homework, extra-curricular activities, family, friends, household chores, and maybe even a job. With all these responsibilities, it's essential to be in tip-top shape. Your body needs lots of support to stay fit and energized.

Our bodies are not self-sufficient. In order to lead a healthy, active life, we need a steady supply of nutrients and water every day. By eating a balance of nutritious whole foods (fresh vegetables, fresh fruits, whole grains, good proteins, etc.) and drinking water, you'll get the nutritional support needed to juggle everyday living to help you stay on top of your game!



Winning Game Plan

Your body needs a powerful team of vitamins and minerals to stay alive. **Vitamins** and **minerals** are responsible for the complex processes that take place in your body. They help produce thousands of hormones, enzymes, and other chemical messengers your body uses to work just right. They also help you fight infection and prevent disease. Your body also needs a good amount of **water** each day. Drinking plenty of water helps with balanced weight, healthy muscles, and the removal of wastes.

The First Group of Players on Your Team - Vitamins

The first group of players on your team is **vitamins**. If you're like most teenagers, you've probably heard one of your parents say, "Eat your vegetables – they are packed with vitamins!" Vitamins are compounds found in abundance in whole, fresh foods. Your body needs them to function properly and each one has a special role to play. For example:

- Vitamin A in carrots helps you see at night.
- B vitamins in green leafy vegetables help your body produce protein and generate energy.
- Vitamin C helps your body heal and repair itself.
- Vitamin D helps build strong bones.

There are two types of vitamins: **fat-soluble** and **water-soluble**.

Fat-soluble vitamins are stored in your body, mainly in fat tissues and the liver. Vitamins A, D, E, and K are fat-soluble, meaning they dissolve in fat but not in water. They are happy to remain stored in your body and the body's own intelligence will send them to where they are needed at the right time.

Water-soluble vitamins are different. They really can't be stored in the body for very long. That's because these vitamins dissolve in water, so extra amounts are carried out of your body. Because they don't stick around, you need to replenish them every day. Vitamin C and all the B vitamins are water-soluble.

Let's take a closer look at each individual vitamin team player:

VITAMIN A This fat-soluble vitamin plays a huge role in healthy eyesight. If you're out with your friends at night, it supports your ability to see in the dark. It also helps you to continue growing and aids in healthy skin. In addition, vitamin A helps you steer clear of infection and illness – more time for fun! Foods rich in vitamin A are carrots, spinach, sweet potatoes, broccoli, nectarines, cantaloupe, eggs, whole milk, and liver.



VITAMIN B There's more than one water-soluble B vitamin. The list is: B1, B2, B6, B12, niacin, folic acid, biotin, and pantothenic acid. Foods rich in B vitamins are whole grains such as oats and wheat, fish, chicken, meats, eggs, dairy products, leafy greens, beans and peas, and citrus fruits such as oranges.

- B1 – Also known as thiamin. Its special job is to help you convert carbohydrates in your food into energy. It also protects your heart and nervous system. If you're stressed out over too much homework or too many chores, having the right amount of B1 in your diet will help. It's known as the "anti-stress vitamin".
- B2 – Also known as riboflavin. Helps to convert food to energy. It also helps prevent headaches.
- B6 – Known as pyridoxine, it helps a wide variety of functions in the body including a healthy metabolism, immune system support, and nervous system support.
- B12 – Known as cobalamin, it helps maintain healthy nerve cells, healthy blood cells, and is needed to make DNA.
- Niacin – Niacin is essential for more than 50 different processes in your body. It helps to convert food to energy and protects cells.
- Folic Acid – Folic acid helps make normal red blood cells and prevents anemia. It's needed for the production of DNA and RNA, the building blocks of cells.



VITAMIN C Everyone's heard of water-soluble vitamin C – it's important for keeping body tissues, such as gums and muscles in good shape. C is also important in helping you heal a cut or wound. It helps your body resist infection so you don't get sick. Everyone knows that vitamin C comes from oranges. Other foods that contain vitamin C are cantaloupes, strawberries, tomatoes, broccoli, and cabbage.

VITAMIN D Vitamin D is a fat-soluble vitamin and is good for strong bones! It is also great for forming strong teeth. It is a good friend to an important mineral – it helps your body absorb the amount of calcium it needs. Vitamin D can be found in salmon, canned sardines, mackerel, tuna, eggs, and enriched milk.



VITAMIN E Everyone needs the fat-soluble vitamin E. It is a hard-working vitamin that helps in the prevention of heart disease. It boosts your immune system and fights free radical* damage. Because vitamin E is such a good free radical fighter, it is one of the most famous antioxidants**. Vitamin E is found in nuts, wheat germ, vegetable oils, spinach, broccoli, and mangos.

VITAMIN K Remember the last time you got cut on your finger? You bled for a little while and then the blood clotted. Guess what? The vitamin K in your body helped make the blood clot so it would not continue to flow and flow. Foods that contain the fat-soluble vitamin K are cauliflower, spinach, broccoli, kale, cabbage, turnips, turnip greens, liver, and dairy products.



FUN FACT:

Folic acid gets its name from the word *foliage* because it's mainly found in leafy, dark green vegetables.



DID YOU KNOW?

Eight strawberries contain more vitamin C than one medium sized orange?



DID YOU KNOW?

Almonds are one of the healthiest types of nuts to eat because they contain high levels of vitamin E.

*Free radicals are unstable oxygen molecules created by your body's natural processes and by the effects of environmental toxins, cigarette smoke, excess alcohol consumption, etc. They can cause damage to your body and possibly contribute to disease.

**Antioxidants, like vitamin E, are enzymes that protect the body by capturing the free radicals and moving them out of your body so they can't do harm. Other antioxidants are vitamin A and vitamin C. Also, fruits and vegetables can be good sources of antioxidants – they can help protect your body and make you feel just great!

Sources: National Institutes of Health Office of Dietary Supplements
Northwestern University Nutrition

Stay tuned next month: **HEALTHY LIVING FOR TEENS PART 2**