



How to Be a Healthy Teenager

Rachel Williams - Chief Vitality Officer

Zest Lifestyle

Introduction

Your teenage years are a time of growth, learning, and change. It's a crucial period for setting the foundations for your health—now and in the future. This guide will help you understand how to take care of your physical, mental, and emotional health, building healthy habits that can last a lifetime.



Physical health



Physical health

Nutrition and a balanced diet



Eating a well-balanced diet is essential for providing your body with the energy it needs to grow, learn, and stay active. A balanced diet includes a mix of proteins, carbohydrates, fats, vitamins, and minerals. Avoid skipping meals, as it can leave you feeling tired and unable to concentrate.

Instead of following fad diets that promise quick results, focus on maintaining a variety of food groups in your meals. Eating a wide range of fruits, vegetables, lean proteins, and whole grains will help you stay energised. It's okay to enjoy a treat when cravings hit, but remember that moderation is key. Peer pressure around food choices can be difficult, but making smart decisions will benefit your health.

Physical health

Exercise and fitness

Staying physically active has a huge impact on your overall health. Regular exercise not only strengthens your muscles and bones but also boosts your mood and helps manage stress. The best kind of exercise is the one you enjoy, whether that's playing sports, dancing, or going for a walk. Aim for at least 60 minutes of physical activity a day, but it doesn't all have to be done at once. Even small bursts of activity count!

Balancing exercise with study and relaxation can sometimes feel tricky. Finding a routine that works for you—like walking or biking to school or joining a sports team—can help you keep fit without feeling overwhelmed. Keep an eye on how much time you spend on screens versus being active, as too much screen time can affect your health.



Physical health



Sleep and rest

Teenagers need between 8 to 10 hours of sleep each night to function at their best. Sleep is not just about feeling rested. It's essential for your body and brain, helping you focus, learn, and feel good throughout the day. A lack of sleep can lead to mood swings, trouble concentrating and feeling stressed.

To ensure you get enough sleep, try to establish a bedtime routine, avoid caffeine in the evening, and limit screen time before bed. The blue light from phones, computers, and televisions can disrupt your body's natural sleep cycle. Prioritising rest will not only improve your mood but also help you perform better at school and in extracurricular activities.

Mental and emotional health



Mental and emotional health

Managing stress and anxiety

Life can sometimes feel overwhelming, especially when juggling schoolwork, friends, and extracurricular activities. Recognising the signs of stress—like feeling anxious, overwhelmed, or constantly tired—is the first step in managing it.

There are many techniques to help reduce stress, such as taking deep breaths, practising mindfulness, or going for a walk. It's important to find activities that help you relax and recharge. Keeping a balance between school, hobbies, and social life can also help reduce pressure. Don't be afraid to take breaks when needed!



Mental and emotional health

Self-esteem and body image



During your teenage years, your body goes through a lot of changes. It's normal to feel unsure about your appearance at times, but it's important to remember that everyone develops at their own pace. Focusing on the things you like about yourself, both inside and out, can help boost your self-esteem.

With social media, it's easy to compare yourself to others but remember that what you see online is often edited and doesn't reflect reality. Try to avoid getting caught up in unrealistic body standards and instead celebrate what makes you unique.

Mental and emotional health

Healthy relationships and social connections

Friendships play a big role in your life as a teenager, but not all friendships are healthy. It's important to surround yourself with people who make you feel good about yourself and support your goals. If a friendship feels toxic or stressful, it might be time to re-evaluate that relationship.

Navigating peer pressure can be challenging, but setting clear boundaries with others helps you protect your mental health. Open communication is key to building strong relationships with friends, family, and even mentors like teachers or coaches. Don't be afraid to talk to someone if you're struggling.



Lifestyle choices and habits



Lifestyle choices and habits

Substance awareness



You may be faced with choices around smoking, alcohol, or drugs during your teenage years. It's important to understand the risks that come with these substances, as they can have lasting effects on your health and wellbeing.

Peer pressure can make it difficult to say no, but it is crucial to learn to stand by your decisions. If you're ever in a situation where you feel uncomfortable or uncertain, seek out support from a trusted adult or friend. There's always help available if you need it.

Lifestyle choices and habits

Digital wellbeing

Technology is a big part of modern life, but too much screen time can negatively impact your health. Finding a healthy balance between online and offline activities is essential. Make time for hobbies, exercise, and face-to-face interactions with friends.

Social media can also affect how you see yourself, especially when comparing your life to others. Remember that what people post online isn't always the complete picture. Protecting your privacy and practising safe online behaviour is also critical for your digital wellbeing.



Building healthy routines



Building healthy routines



Creating a personal health plan

Creating a routine that incorporates healthy habits can make a big difference in how you feel day-to-day. Start by setting small goals for areas like fitness, nutrition, and mental health. Maybe it's committing to a daily walk, adding more vegetables to your meals, or taking time to meditate.

Tracking your progress through a journal or app can help you stay motivated and make it easier to adjust your routine as you go. It's important to remember that health is a journey, and small steps add up over time.

Getting help and support



Getting help and support

Where to find reliable information

Sometimes, knowing where to turn for health advice can be difficult. Getting your information from trustworthy sources, such as websites recommended by health professionals, teachers, or parents, is important. If you have concerns about your health, whether physical or mental, don't hesitate to talk to a GP or school counsellor.

If you're feeling overwhelmed or need someone to talk to, reaching out to friends, family, or a mentor can be a huge help. There are also many helplines and resources available specifically for young people.



Getting help and support

Resources

[NHS - Health for Teens](#)

The NHS provides a wealth of information on various health topics relevant to teenagers, including mental health, physical health, and lifestyle choices.

[YoungMinds](#)

A leading UK charity dedicated to young people's mental health, YoungMinds offers advice, resources, and a helpline for those needing support with issues like anxiety, depression, and stress.

[Childline](#)

Childline offers free and confidential support on a wide range of issues, including bullying, relationships, and mental health. They provide a 24/7 helpline and online chat service.

[The Mix](#)

The Mix offers support and information on anything related to teenage life, from relationships and mental health to drugs and body image. They have forums, articles, and a helpline for direct support.

[Kooth](#)

Kooth is an online mental health community offering free, anonymous counselling and support for young people. You can chat with counsellors and access articles and self-help resources.

[Talk to FRANK](#)

FRANK provides information on the risks of drugs and alcohol and offers advice on how to stay safe. There is also a helpline for confidential support.

Thank you for reading



Taking care of your health is one of the best things you can do for yourself, now and in the future.

Small changes can make a big difference, from eating well and staying active to managing stress and building strong relationships.

Remember, it's okay to ask for help when you need it, and you don't have to go through any challenges alone. Your health journey is personal to you, so take it one step at a time!

Rachel

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About Rachel



Rachel Williams is the driving force behind Zest Lifestyle, an employee wellness consultancy transforming lives and boosting business performance by creating healthier, happier workforces.

With a rich background as an author, presenter, cognitive behavioural therapist (insomnia), stress management consultant, NLP Master Practitioner, personal trainer, and nutritionist, Rachel's wellness journey started back in 2000 when she realised her high-stress telecoms marketing job was taking a serious toll on her health.

Determined to turn things around, she revamped her approach to eating, sleeping, and exercising—setting the foundation for what would become Zest Lifestyle. Today, Rachel works with top organisations like Cisco, Activision Blizzard, Mars Wrigley, and British Airways, and a host of others, helping employees sleep better, eat better, work better, and ultimately, feel better through bespoke health checks, coaching, wellness mentoring, and live sessions.

With the launch of Zestify, Rachel has taken her mission further by making Zest Lifestyle's wellness services available online—accessible anytime, anywhere.

Despite being “gym-averse” herself, Rachel's dynamic, no-fuss approach to healthier living resonates with countless people. It's this relatable and practical ethos that makes her a trusted guide for those wanting to create real, lasting change.

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