

BACKGROUND

GIRLSCOOUTS AND NUTRITION

Why It Matters

Studies have shown that the diet quality of children steadily declines as they get older. Consequently, only 26 percent of teenage girls eat the recommended five servings of fruits and vegetables a day. Teen food choices are often more influenced by social pressures to be thin, athletic, or accepted than by nutritional content. Because of this, girls comprise the majority of those affected by eating disorders. In fact, 13 percent of high school girls vomit, take laxatives or take diet pills to lose or keep from gaining weight.

Establishing healthy eating habits early can be the key to lifelong good health in later years. Studies show that women who maintain a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy products, and lean meats have 30 percent less chance of dying from cancer, heart disease or stroke.

As the preeminent organization for girls, Girl Scouts is committed to helping girls grow strong in body, mind and spirit. Knowledge and healthy eating habits gained through Girl Scout programs can help girls make responsible decisions about their nutrition that will benefit them for a lifetime.

Program Activities

The Girl Scouts offer the following nutrition-related programs that emphasize the importance of healthy eating habits.

- **GirlPower!** is a collaboration with the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to help 9 to 14-year-old girls develop lifelong habits for mental, physical, and emotional health. Two booklets provide information and fun interactive activities focusing on nutrition, eating disorders, and fitness.
- *Girls Are Great*, a series of age-level booklets that help girls feel good about themselves and focus on topics relevant to growing up female in today's society. Some topics include healthy eating, body image, eating disorders, and exercise.
- In partnership with Florida Citrus Growers, Girl Scouts provides special individual activities that promote an understanding of healthy food choices, and support earning the Girl Scout nutrition awards.
- **GirlSports**, a major initiative designed to increase girls' participation in sports, health and fitness activities. It promotes lifelong habits with a healthy focus on diet, nutrition, and exercise.

Did you know...

- According to the National Center for Health Statistics, one in 100 females between the ages of 12 and 18 has an eating disorder?
- Osteoporosis is a major public health threat for more than 28 million Americans, 80 percent of whom are women?
- Donna Shalala, U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services, and Susan Blumenthal, U.S. Assistant Surgeon General are Girl Scouts alumnae?

History

Girl Scouting has always been at the forefront in encouraging girls to eat healthfully and pursue an active lifestyle. Girl Scout Founder, Juliette Gordon Low advised the first Girl Scouts, “To make yourself strong and healthy, it is necessary to begin with your inside, and to get the blood into good order and the heart to work well.” Heeding her advice, Girls Scouts in the early years were growing vegetable gardens, cooking nutritious meals and practicing calisthenics. The first Girl Scout handbook, published in 1913, taught girls to make themselves strong by “taking healthy exercise, open air, and wholesome food – not sticky sweets, which ruin teeth and spoil appetites.”

Today in Girl Scouting, girls at every age level can select from activities that encourage choosing healthy foods and that support increased physical activity. Each handbook gives simple guidelines for nutritious eating and healthy living. In fact, Girl Scouting is viewed as the program where girls grow strong and build a lifetime of positive eating and exercise habits.

Who We Are

Girl Scouts is the world’s preeminent organization dedicated solely to girls – all girls – where, in an accepting and nurturing environment, girls build character and skills for success in the real world. In partnerships with committed adults, girls develop qualities that will serve them all their lives – like strong values, social conscience, and conviction about their own potential and self-worth. In Girl Scouts, girls discover the fun, friendship, and power of girls together. Through the many enriching experiences provided by Girl Scouting, they grow courageous and strong.

Girl Scouts. Where Girls Grow Strong.

Additional Resources

Girl Scouts can earn the following nutrition-related Girl Scout awards: “Eat Right, Stay Healthy,” “Healthy Habits,” “Make It, Eat It,” “Food, Fiber and Farming,” “Outdoor Cook,” “Food Power,” “The Food Connection,” “Exploring Healthy Eating,” “Health and Fitness,” “Creative Cooking,” and “Women’s Health.”