

Kids Win When Family Meals are a Priority

Make mealtime quality time



FAMILY MEALTIMES HELP...

- Parents gauge their children's moods and learn more about what they are doing and who they are doing it with.
- Provide a child with a structured daily routine, increasing a sense of security and well-being.
- Children acquire language skills and develop literacy while engaged in conversation with parents and siblings.
- Increase a child's well-being through positive "protective" outcomes such as improved academic performance and decreased risk of substance abuse or delinquency.
- Children see parents and others model healthy eating behaviors that include trying new foods, using moderation, and using good social manners.
- Improve the whole family's dietary intake, such as increased consumption of healthier foods like fruits, vegetables, and whole grains while decreasing unhealthier foods.
- Reduce the risk of developing childhood obesity.

FAMILY MEALS HELP BUILD HEALTHY KIDS

Studies show that parents and teenagers alike think that family meals are important and enjoyable. There are many benefits, both social and health-related, that a family can expect when family mealtimes are part of the regular routine. Aim for sharing at least four family meals per week, which may include other mealtimes besides the dinner meal, and try to include your child in mealtime preparation. Not only will you help him learn useful skills, you'll help create memories to last a lifetime.



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SPEAK POSITIVELY ABOUT THE FOOD YOU ARE EATING

Make mealtime a *positive* and *pleasant* experience by taking time to talk and learn more about your family members each day. Try these family mealtime conversation ideas to help get started:

Talk about the food you're eating

- Is it a fruit or vegetable? Does it come from a plant or animal?
- How might other families serve the food you're eating?
- Where and how does it grow?

Talk about what you'll do after dinner

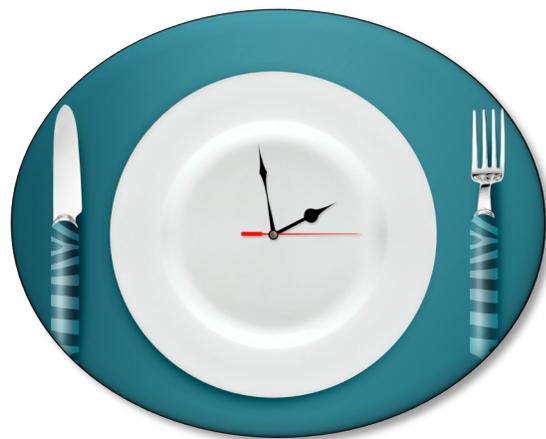
- Will you play games – if so, which one will you choose?
- Will you watch television – if so, what fun activities could you do during the commercials?
- Will you go outside – if so, what will you do?

Talk about what is happening in your family

- What happened in everyone's day at school or work?
- What was your favorite part of the day?

Talk about what is happening in your neighborhood

- Is there a family you can help?
- Are there any local activities or fun things coming up?
- Did you notice anything interesting (related to scenery like stores, houses, cars, or people) on the way home from school?



REFERENCES

Brotherson, S. (2009). *The Big Benefits of Family Meals*. Retrieved from University of South Dakota Extension Website: <https://www.ag.ndsu.edu/food/health-and-nutrition/eatsmart/eat-smart.-play-hard.-magazines-1/2009-eat-smart-play-hard-magazine/test-item>