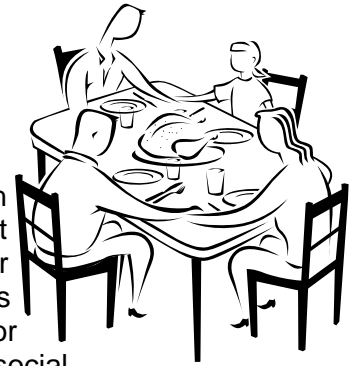


FAMILY DAY

A Day to Eat Dinner with Your Children



Two-worker families, different shifts, overtime, working late and teens with jobs are some of the reasons given by families as to why they don't eat together. Although it may seem simple and old-fashioned, taking time for family meals has been proven to have many positive impacts. As well as offering a sense of community, family meal time offers opportunities for parents to teach children family traditions and values, table manners, social skills, cooking skills, and healthy nutrition and dietary habits. It provides parents of adolescents the chance to stay involved in their children's lives, friends, and activities, increasing the likelihood of their avoidance of tobacco, alcohol and drugs.

Creating Family Meal Time

- ◆ **Set a pattern of family dinners** when the children are young so it becomes a habit.
- ◆ Check your schedules often and make family meals a priority. These meals may be breakfast, lunch, or dinner; at home or in a restaurant. **The key is to spend time together.**
- ◆ **Turn off the television, radio, cell phones, and other distractions** and allow time for tuning into each other.
- ◆ **Allow every member of the family to contribute to the conversation** and keep the conversations polite. The dinner table is not the place for conflict or discipline.
- ◆ **Listen to other family members' thoughts and views**, not just what happened to them during the day. An occasional conversation starter may be needed.
- ◆ **Get everyone involved in family meals** whether it's planning the menus, shopping for groceries, setting the table, chopping the vegetables, or doing dishes.

It's more important than ever for families to sit down for a meal together. If you think you're too busy to get together as a family, think again. There are too many reasons not to.

Excerpted from "What the Research Tells Us About Family Meals" by Shari L. Gallup, Cheryle Jones Syracuse, Cindy Oliveri. Family and Consumer Sciences, Human Development and Family Science. www.hec.ohio-state.edu/famlife

Keep Talking—Conversation Starters for the Family Meal by Maureen Treacy Lahr and Julie Pfitzinger is perfect for families wanting to reclaim the family meal and get everyone thinking, talking, listening and laughing around the table.



FOOD for the SOUL
Reclaim the tradition of a shared family meal.
For ideas visit:
familytabletime.com
www.allfood.com/kids
www.casafamilyday.org

www.puttingfamilyfirst.org
www.yougottaloveparents.org
www.hec.ohio-state.edu/famlife

Get Creative!

- ☺ Eat in the dining room with candles and fancy china.
- ☺ Plan a "theme" dinner, including table settings, music, an after-dinner movie or read-aloud book.
- ☺ Experiment with regional or international cuisine—post a map in the kitchen, research the culture.
- ☺ Take a meal to your aging parents to celebrate Parents Week. Be sure to thank them for raising you.
- ☺ Keep it simple! Meals together needn't be extravagant.
- ☺ Try these conversation ideas: Which teacher will you remember the most and why? When did you laugh when you shouldn't have?
- ☺ If family dinner is already your routine, volunteer to serve a meal at a food pantry on Family Day.

The Family That Eats Together...

The key to spiritually healthy kids may be as close as your kitchen table



Unlike the families of the 1950's and 60's, new millennium families find themselves heading in a million different directions. Work schedules, after-school activities, television, computers, and church activities all compete for our time. But experts are finding that making family meals a priority is more than worth the effort. Spending quality time together over dinner can contribute to your child's emotional and spiritual growth. And kids who feel close to their families are more likely to take the family's value system to heart. Even if you order pizza and eat off paper plates, the time you spend gathered together as a family will always be time well spent.

Overcoming the Top 5 Excuses

1. "Dad (or Mom) doesn't get home in time for dinner."

If the kids are hungry before one or the other parent is home, resist the urge to eat without that parent. Christian family specialist Caryl Krueger suggests feeding the kids a healthy snack like raw vegetables or crackers and cheese while you wait for everyone to get home. If one parent or a teenager works an evening shift, consider making breakfast your family meal. A family breakfast can be a wonderful start to a busy day.

2. "We've got too many after-school activities."

Let organizers know that eating together is a priority for your family. If enough parents take a stand for preserving dinner hour, after-school activities will be scheduled around dinnertime like they used to be. [You may also be doing yourself a favor to take an honest look at family commitments and cut back.]

3. "Dinnertime is our only chance to talk without the kids around."

Krueger suggests parents eat dinner with the children, then find time to talk after the kids have gone to bed or while you're cleaning the kitchen. Remember that the family meal is an investment in your children.

4. "The kids don't eat the same things we eat."

Ahh, the picky eater. There's one in every family. One way to get picky kids to eat is to include them in choosing the menu and cooking the food.

5. "Our kids aren't old enough to sit still during a meal."

A wiggly toddler can put a crimp in your calm family meal. But Krueger says, "Kids are never too young to participate in family dinner. This is the time to begin teaching them about manners, polite conversation, and healthy eating habits."

The Top 5 Reasons to Make It Happen

1. If not now, when?

Making family dinners a habit when children are young means fewer hassles down the road. Once kids are teenagers with their own jam-packed schedules, it will be hard to get them to scale back.

2. Mealtime is when our kids learn from us.

A relaxed family meal is the perfect time to teach our kids, not just about manners and the food groups, but about ourselves—what we do all day, our personal and spiritual beliefs, our relationship with God. Mealtime should be a time when they hear the messages, values, and lessons we want them to learn. At the same time, this is a great time to give your kids your undivided attention.

3. Your kids need your perspective on current events.

Mealtime is a great time to talk about what's happening in the world, especially now, when there is so much fear and uncertainty around us. Encourage your kids to talk about a news story they heard. If they read the newspaper, talk about what they read. Discuss the spiritual and moral issues these stories bring up and answer any questions.

4. It's the perfect time to make plans together.

Keep the family calendar close by and discuss plans for the coming days. Get everyone's input on what you'll do on the weekend or where you'll go on vacation.

5. You can add on a family devotion.

After dinner when the family is relaxed and willing to linger around the table, take a few minutes to have a family devotion. Take turns selecting and reading a favorite Bible passage then discuss it and pray about it together.