

Eating Together, Eating Better

Studies show that eating a meal or snack together
at least once a day has many benefits.

Children:

- Do better in school
- Have better social and language skills
- Are more likely to be a healthy weight
- Are more connected to their families and friends
- Have a better understanding of family values and traditions
- Are less likely to smoke, use drugs or alcohol
- Are less likely to be bullied
- Have less risk of depression and suicide
- Feel more secure and stable, with a greater sense of belonging



"I love having dinner with Grandpa! I tell him about school and the sports I play. He tells me his stories – it's cool!"

Eating together, time to connect.



"I teach my child to eat by eating with her. We make meals and memories together. It's a lesson she'll use for life."

Families:

- Build strong family ties by setting the table for sharing and talking
- Eat more vegetables, fruits and other foods high in calcium, fibre, iron and other nutrients
- Eat fewer fried foods, chips and pop
- Enjoy a greater variety of foods
- Save money by eating out less often
- Create family traditions and memories





On the run?

Tips for fast meals, not fast foods.

- Let kids choose a favourite meal or snack and help with shopping and cooking. Kids can peel, chop, stir or set the table.
- Keep it simple – a sandwich, milk and fruit makes a fast and healthy meal.
- Pack a picnic to eat together before or after practice, games or work.
- Use frozen or canned products to save time. Buy bagged salads, pre-chopped veggies or a roasted chicken.
- Cook up a big batch of soups, stews, casseroles or pasta dishes to keep in the freezer.
- Make the same meal for everybody!

Family meals happen any time a child and at least one adult eat together.

It is a time to role model healthier choices and for everyone to “check in”.

“We have breakfast together most days – the food is easy and it gets everyone off to a good start.”



For GREAT Family Meals...

- **G**ather around simple meals.
- **R**emember, families can share any meal – breakfast, lunch and snacks count just as much as dinner.
- **E**at what you usually eat – to start. Later you can work on what is served if you want.
- **A**llow time for meals. Make them part of your routine.
- **T**urn off the screens – TV, computer, phones and video games.

Table Talk

- Family meals are a time for food, laughter and pleasant conversation.
- Choose another time to talk about report cards and discipline issues.
- Remember, parents decide **what** to serve, **when** and **where**; children decide **how much** to eat and **whether** to eat.
- For conversation starters check out: www.makemealtimefamilytime.com/free_mealtime_conversation_cards.pdf

For more information call Dietitian Services at HealthLink BC at 8-1-1