



Family Meals

Family meals have many benefits that go far beyond nutrition.

Why have meals together?

- Family meals give caregivers and children a chance to spend time together, enjoy each other's company and talk about their days. Caregivers can learn more about kids' activities and friends and offer support to hard issues of the day.
- Children who eat meals with their families do better in school and feel better about themselves.
- Teens who have family meals are less likely to smoke, use drugs and drink alcohol.
- Talking with children during meals helps kids learn new words and practice telling and understanding stories. As a result, this can help kids read better.
- Family meals offer children a chance to try different foods which can help them eat healthier.

Tips to eating well together

- Try to have meals together most nights of the week, but if you struggle, even 2 – 3 times is a good start.
- Make family meals an enjoyable and relaxed time. Shut off all distractions like TVs and smartphones. To get started, ask everyone to take turns sharing one thing that was good about their day and one thing that could have been better. Try asking questions that cannot be answered in one word. If your child doesn't want to talk, don't push too hard. It is good for your child to be with the family and listen to other people talking. The idea is to make mealtimes enjoyable and social.
- Check out www.thefamilydinnerproject.org for activities, conversation starters and recipes.