



Information To Improve the Selection and Use Of Foods In Your Home

Steps for Making Meal Time, Family Time

Volume XIX

Family meals are making a come back, in part because of increasing rates of obesity among children. Also, shared family meals are more likely to be nutritious. Kids who eat regularly with their families are less likely to snack on unhealthy foods and more likely to eat fruits, vegetables and whole grains.



Beyond health and nutrition, there is the added benefit of together-time, a time to talk and reconnect. This becomes even more important as kids get older. Studies have shown that teens who take part in regular family meals are less likely to smoke, drink alcohol or use marijuana and other drugs.

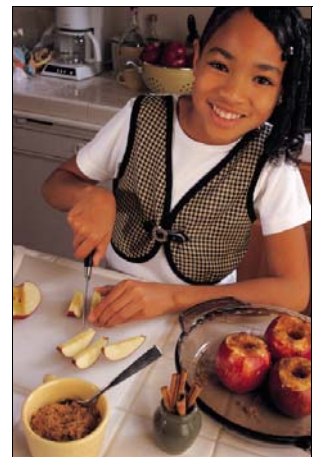
Most parents don't need to be convinced that family meals are a good idea — they just need the extra time it takes to plan, prepare and share them. Even if you find the time, how can you achieve the ideal family meal where everyone catches up and nobody argues?

Follow these three steps to schedule family meals and make them enjoyable for everyone who pulls up a chair.

1. Plan It. To plan more family meals, first assess how many you're currently having and set a reasonable goal. Look over the family calendar to choose the best dates for family meals so everyone can be there.

2. Prepare It. Once you have all your supplies on hand, you're ready to prepare the meal. Involving the kids can mean a little extra work, but it's often worth it. Try involving kids in the final steps, such as putting plates on the table, tossing the salad, pouring a beverage, folding the napkins. Set a good example by saying please and thank you for their help. Being upbeat and pleasant as you prepare the meal can rub off on your kids.

3. Enjoy It. Count yourself in, even if you have lots more to do before the night is over. Try not to focus on that during dinner. Sit down at the table with the kids. It's good for them and it's good for you.



Everyone may be starving, but teach your kids to wait till everyone is seated before digging in. Create a moment of calm before the meal begins. You're setting a mood and teaching a little lesson in manners and patience. Mealtime should be a time to feel nurtured. Keep the interactions positive and let the conversation flow.

Source: kidshealth.org

WORD WISE



Obesity (say: oh-BEE-si-tee) - Obesity is defined as an excessive accumulation of body fat. Obesity is present when total body weight is more than 25 percent fat in boys and more than 32 percent fat in girls. The key to keeping children at a healthy weight is taking a whole family approach. It's the "practice what you preach" mentality. Make eating and exercise a family affair.

Source: kidshealth.org

Steps to Nutrition and Health

Take steps towards better nutrition and health. It is never too late to make a change for the better. Make smart choices at every meal and do something each day to be more active. Here are the food groups that provide you the right nutrients each day.

Grains: Did you know that at least half (or about three) of the servings of grains you eat each day should be whole grains? Whole grains include all parts of the grain kernel (germ, bran and endosperm), not just the white flour that is in most foods today. Oatmeal, brown rice, barley and 100 percent whole wheat products are a few examples of whole grains.

Vegetables: Most people do not eat enough vegetables daily, especially dark green or orange veggies. If you can eat one large salad at lunch plus a few vegetables at dinner and for snacks, you are stepping in the right direction.

Fruits: Think fresh whole fruit and get a variety each day. Start with fruit for breakfast and end with fruit for dessert. Take fruit with you for snacking, too!

Milk/Dairy: Most people need to drink about three glasses of skim milk each day or get the equivalent with yogurt. Dairy foods that are low in sodium and fat yet high in calcium are the right choice.

Meat/Beans: If you are like most Americans, you probably get more than enough protein; you just don't get enough variety or keep it low in saturated fat. Start integrating beans/legumes, fish and nuts in your diet—especially if they take the place of meat.



Step More, Sit Less: Being more active and less sedentary helps you control weight and lower your risk for many chronic diseases. Did you know that cleaning the house instead of watching TV burns twice the calories? In addition to being more active, try to get about 30 to 60 minutes of exercise, like brisk walking, each day.

FYI: Visit www.mypyramid.gov to obtain more information about MyPyramid and to find out what is right for you based on your sex, age and activity level. *Step Up to Nutrition and Health* is the March 2006 slogan for National Nutrition Month from the American Dietetic Association.

Source: American Dietetic Association

SPANISH MACARONI

Ingredients

1/2 pound ground beef
1 (8 oz.) can tomato sauce
1/2 green pepper, chopped
1 (15 oz.) can tomatoes
1/2 cup onion, chopped
1 tbsp chili powder
1 1/2 cups macaroni (uncooked)
1 1/2 cups water



Directions

Brown ground beef in large frying pan until cooked. After meat is cooked, drain off fat. Add green pepper and onion. Cook until vegetables are tender. Stir in remaining ingredients except macaroni and bring mixture to a boil. Stir macaroni into meat mixture and reduce heat to low. Cover and cook until macaroni is tender, 10 to 15 minutes. 224 calories 4 grams fat.

Source: Eating Right is Basic MSUE

NUTRITION TRIVIA

The more you know about how food benefits the body, the better able you are to plan and prepare meals that promote the health of the children in your care.

Did you know...

- Oats contain more protein, which is vital for a strong and healthy body, than any other grain. To incorporate more oats in your cooking, replace the flour in crumb-type fruit crisp and coffee cake topping with oats, and use oats as a meat extender.
- You should *not* rinse rice before cooking it. This could wash away some of the iron and B vitamins that the rice is enriched with.
- Breakfast provides approximately 22 percent of the total calories a child consumes in a day. It can also supply vitamins A, C, B1 and B2, calcium, fiber and iron.



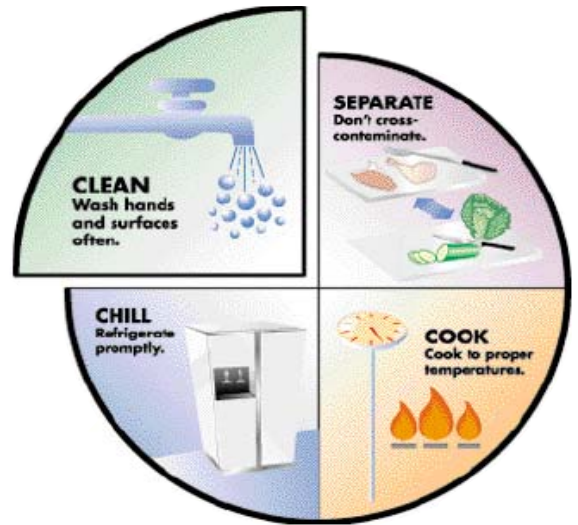
Source: Association for Child Development

CLEAN



Wash hand and surfaces often

You can't see, taste or smell them... They're sneaky little critters and they can spread throughout the kitchen and get onto cutting boards, utensils, sponges, countertops and food. They are foodborne bacteria—and if eaten, they can cause foodborne illness. **So on your mark, get set, go...clean!**



Use these tips to keep your hands, surfaces and utensils squeaky clean!

- 1. Splish, Splash:** Wash hands and utensils in hot, soapy water before and after food preparation and especially after preparing raw meat, poultry, eggs or seafood. Also, remember to wash your hands after using the bathroom, changing diapers or handling pets.
- 2. All Aboard:** Cutting boards (including plastic, non-porous, acrylic and wooden boards) should be run through the dishwasher or washed in hot soapy water after each use. Discard boards that are excessively worn.
- 3. Towel Toss:** Consider using paper towels to clean up kitchen surfaces. When done, throw away the towel. If you use cloth towels, wash them often in the hot cycle of your washing machine.

BAC-Attack Quiz



How long should you wash your hands to send bacteria down the drain?

- 5 seconds
- 10 seconds
- 15 seconds
- 20 seconds

Answer: d - 20 seconds

TIP

Using a disinfectant cleaner or a mixture of bleach and water on surfaces can provide some added protection against bacteria.

Source: Michigan Food Safety Task Force

Check our Web site:

macombcountymi.gov/msuextension

- Calendar of upcoming programs
- Program descriptions
- Volunteer opportunities
- Past Healthy Bites issues



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