

# The Importance of Family Meals



No matter how busy life may get, it's important to prioritize a family meal even if it's one a week or month.

Did you know that experts have found that children and adolescents who eat regularly with their families are more likely to eat fruits, vegetables, and whole grains? Routine family meals also help with better grades in middle and high school, less substance use and depression in adolescents, and healthier weight gain in children.

**TIP**

**Discover healthy recipes for your family from [cookingmatters.org/recipes](https://cookingmatters.org/recipes)**

## Tips to Get Started

- Choose a time when everyone can enjoy at least one meal together — it may be breakfast, lunch, or dinner.
- As the parent/caregiver, you should decide what time meals are served and what the food choices are. Children can then decide what and how much to eat of what is offered.
- Include your children in preparing the meal. Studies show that children who get involved in the kitchen will eat healthier and feel happier.
- Gather around the table for a meal without phones, tablets or the television.
- Keep the conversation positive. Check out [TheFamilyDinnerProject.org](https://TheFamilyDinnerProject.org) for conversation starters and ideas.
- Limit eating and drinking unhealthy snacks between meals.
- Model the habits you want your children to have such as eating fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.