

Make Mealtime Family Time

Make meals and memories together. It's a lesson they'll use for life.

It takes a little work to bring everyone together for meals. But it's worth it and the whole family eats better.

- ✓ Start eating meals together as a family when your kids are young. This way, it becomes a habit.
- ✓ Plan when you will eat together as a family. Write it on your calendar.
- ✓ You may not be able to eat together every day. Try to have family meals as often as you can, whether it is breakfast, lunch, or dinner.

Cook together. Eat together.

Teach your kids to create healthy meals. They'll learn skills they'll use for life.

- ✓ Cooking together can mean more "mommy and me" time on busy days. Ask your child to help with easy tasks, like adding veggie toppings to a cheese pizza.
- ✓ Kids like to try foods they help make. It's a great way to encourage your child to eat fruits and vegetables.
- ✓ Kids feel good about doing something "grown-up." Give them small jobs to do. Praise their efforts. Their smiles will light up your day.
- ✓ Kids love helping in the kitchen. Help teach them to follow instructions, count, and more.
- ✓ It's normal for 2- to 5-year-olds to be "picky" eaters. Help them increase the types of foods they like by setting a good example.
- ✓ They learn by watching you. Kids get curious when they see you eating fruits or vegetables. Before you know it, they'll want to taste what you are having.
- ✓ Encourage your child to try foods. But, don't lecture or force your child to eat.



Talk together.

- ✓ Focus on the meal and each other. Turn off the television. Take phone calls later.
- ✓ Talk about fun and happy things. Try to make meals a stress-free time. Here are some topic ideas:
 - What made you feel really happy today?
 - What did you have to eat at lunch today?
 - What's your favorite veggie? Why?
 - Tell me one thing you learned today?
 - What made you laugh today?

Make mealtime a family time.

- ✓ Start small. Busy families are usually pressed for time. Try to get the family together for meals when you can, whether it is for breakfast, lunch, or dinner.
- ✓ Set regular mealtimes so everyone will know when meals will be served.
- ✓ Emphasize the importance of being together, not just eating the food.