

Five Easy Ways to Enjoy More Mealtimes Together

Surveys confirm that most parents and children enjoy family meals – and that most want to eat together more often. Get your family on the mealtime track by making a commitment to enjoy more meals together. Take a quick inventory of how many times you usually eat together now. Then use these five easy tips to enjoy more family mealtimes together:



Plan one more family mealtime in every week.

LOOK FOR EASY WAYS to add one more family meal to your weekly schedule. If evenings seem too hectic for a family dinner, set aside time for a weekend breakfast or lunch. After a month or two of this new pattern, you can then add another family meal each week – until, before you know it, you are enjoying eating together most days of the week.

Plan to enjoy tasty menus for family meals together.

IF YOU THINK putting a meal together has to be complicated or time-consuming, think again! The best meals are simple, delicious, and planned together. Let everyone choose a favorite menu. Even small children can pick a main dish (like pasta or tacos), a vegetable (green salad or cooked carrots), and fruit for dessert (sliced apples or a fruit salad).



Plan to set an appealing table for family meals.

FOOD IS JUST ONE IMPORTANT PART of mealtime. There are really easy ways to set the mood for a relaxed time around the table. A little extra attention to the actual table setting can add a lot to mealtime atmosphere (with very little expense). Here are a few everyday possibilities: a candle, colored napkins, and wipe-clean, plastic tablemats for children.



Plan to enjoy conversation at the table.

THE CONVERSATIONS THAT FAMILIES HAVE while eating together offer many benefits. Children learn new words from adults – and adults are able to share their values with the next generation. Choose topics that are positive and allow everyone to talk. Even toddlers like to discuss topics like “what is your favorite color” or “what made you laugh today.”



Plan to enjoy distraction-free meals.

TVs, DVDs, MULTIPLE PHONE CALLS AND TEXT MESSAGING can distract anyone – making it difficult to eat or to carry on a conversation. The solution is simple: Declare mealtime an electronics-free zone (except for an emergency phone call, of course). Imagine that you are dining at a nice restaurant and play some soothing background music at low volume.

