

Five Key Reasons to Make Family Mealtimes a Priority

Sometimes a very simple act can have important, long-lasting benefits. According to parenting and health experts, that is exactly the case with family mealtimes. Eating and talking together can help children be happier, healthier, and more successful at school. Family mealtimes can also help make parenting easier! Here are five key reasons to make family mealtimes more of a priority in your home:

Family mealtimes foster family togetherness.

EATING TOGETHER is one important way to build a sense of family unity. Developing a sense of family identity and togetherness helps children feel safe and secure in a world that can be confusing. Mealtime conversations – both the talking and the listening – are more important than where you actually eat together or the specific foods that are served.



Family mealtimes help prevent behavior problems.

IF YOU WANT to keep your child from getting into trouble, family mealtimes are a great place to start. The more often that families eat together the less likely teenagers are to become depressed, use illegal drugs, abuse alcohol, smoke cigarettes, develop eating disorders, or get pregnant. A simple family habit leads to impressive benefits for kids.



Family mealtimes help children do well in school.

MEALTIME CONVERSATIONS also translate into success at school. As children listen to adults talk, they learn important language skills, such as new vocabulary and putting words into sentences. These skills, which are necessary for understanding what you read and for expressing yourself verbally, then help children do better in the classroom and on tests.



Family mealtimes help improve children's nutrition.

WHAT YOU PUT ON THE TABLE is also important. When families make mealtimes more of a priority, they naturally tend to pay more attention to what is served. Children who have more family meals get more of the nutrient-rich foods that build strong bodies and smart brains: more fruits, veggies, lean meats, and milk; fewer fried foods and soft drinks.



Family mealtimes help prevent weight problems.

SMART EATING HABITS help children grow up with a healthy weight, avoiding problems like being seriously overweight or developing an eating disorder. During family meals, you can model positive, healthy habits for your children, such as eating slowly, enjoying a variety of foods, and stopping when you are comfortably satisfied rather than overstuffed.

