



## Finding Time for Family Meals



As you read the “Healthy role model” and “How to be a good nutrition role model” tip sheets, you may have noticed that it may be hard to conquer each step. Parents have a busy life as is! We’ll be focusing more on family meals and why it is necessary.

It is important to know that eating as a family gives kids comfort and confidence in their day. It can be challenging to get everyone together to have dinner at the same time. Eating at the same time is not easy due to hectic school and work schedules. Family meal time needs to be a priority and not a chore. Being a together as a family is most important!

### Tips to help you make time for family meals:

- **Plan your meals ahead of time.** Making a weekly meal plan and keeping your pantry and freezer stocked up can save a lot of time. It will be much easier to make dinner, if you know what you want to make and you have all the ingredients in the house.
- **Crock-pot cooking.** If you’re working late, check out some healthy crock pot recipes, or cook a bit more on the weekends and freeze meals in individual portions.
- **Make it simple.** A healthy home-made meal doesn’t have to take hours. Grilled chicken and veggies only takes half an hour to make and is an enjoyable meal.
- **Engage kids in meal prep for family dinner.** Children are more likely to eat better when they help with meal preparation responsibilities (ex: setting the table, measuring ingredients, etc.). Being engaged in cooking healthy meals at an early age can improve long term cooking skills and encourage a healthier lifestyle.
- **Eat together at the table.** It’s easier to talk to each other when you’re face to face. This can be a time to reflect on each other’s day.
- **No Electronics.** Focus on each other by turning off the TV, cell phones and iPads/laptops.

- Parents and older siblings can be great role models for good eating habits.
- Introduce one new food item at least 3 times a week.

## Strategies to Prioritize Family Meals

- **Try to say NO to late afternoon meetings.** Children often get ignored when parents are extremely involved with work/school committees.



- **Try not to over schedule your children.** If your kid's schedules are so busy that you're always in a rush and have to eat dinner in the car on the way to the next activity, it's time to reconsider.

- **Pick one meal a day that works for the whole family.** If you can't eat as a family every day, then pick one day a week. Then gradually add another day.



- **Set a time for family meals.** This makes it easier for everyone to plan their schedules.



- **Use a weekly family meal schedule.** As a family, schedule your family meals (2-3 times/week) and write down what will be for breakfast, lunch, or dinner.