



Family Table Talk Information

Why Are Family Mealtimes Important? (<http://family.samhsa.gov/get/mealtime.aspx>)

- Children who do not eat dinner with their families are 61 percent more likely to use alcohol, tobacco, or illegal drugs. By contrast, children who eat dinner with their families every night of the week are 20 percent less likely to drink, smoke, or use illegal drugs.¹
- Teens who eat frequent family dinners are less likely than other teens to have sex at young ages, get into fights, or be suspended from school, and they are at lower risk for thoughts of suicide.²
- By eating with your children, it is more likely that they will eat healthier foods and more balanced meals.³
- Dining together is a chance for parents and children to talk with one another.
- Parental influence and involvement is an important tool in preventing substance abuse. Regularly sitting down for a meal with your children is one way to connect with them and be involved with what is happening in their lives.

What Should We Talk About? (<http://family.samhsa.gov/get/mealtime.aspx>)

- Ask everyone to share their favorite part or biggest challenge of the day.
- Plan the next day's dinner together.
- Share your own childhood memories.
- Discuss an activity the family can do together.
- Talk with your children about a book they are reading or a movie they have seen.
- Eating dinner together every night is an opportunity to open the doors of communication. This will help you find out more about your children's likes, dislikes, and daily life. Having this information can help you direct your children toward positive activities and behavior, reducing the likelihood that they will get involved with alcohol, tobacco, and illegal drugs.

Nine Meal Time Tips (<http://life.familyeducation.com/family-time/healthy-lifestyle/29528.html?relinks>)

1. Don't feel guilty if family dinners are not a daily event. Start with what's possible at the moment, naturally transitioning toward eating together several times per week.
2. Family discussions need not begin and end while seated at the dinner table. Family members, including even young children, may begin communicating while helping to prepare the meal and setting the table. Mealtime conversations may continue as the family clears the table and does the dishes.
3. The family dinner should be a relaxing, pleasurable occasion. Unpleasant topics, negative criticism, and passing judgment are not appropriate dinner conversation.
4. Always involve your kids in the dinner discourse. Their participation will not only make them feel more valued; it will also expose them to new language and ideas. The art of conversation and learning how to take turns speaking are important social skills for everyday life.
5. Specific questions to children (for example, "How many nibbles did you get on your line when you and Dad went fishing Saturday?") are more likely to trigger conversation than general questions. ("How was your day today?")
6. Laughter is the best dinnertime music.
7. Family dinners don't always have to be evening events. They also can be weekday or weekend breakfasts or lunches. What's most important is communicating the importance and desirability of these family meals.
8. Change the family dinner location sometimes. How about an afternoon picnic, dinner under the stars, or Saturday breakfast in your child's room?
9. Turn off the TV and radio. Unplug the phone or put on the answering machine. Don't let interruptions spoil this special time.



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Meal Time Stats

- Only 1/3 of U.S. families eat dinner together most nights (<http://life.familyeducation.com/family-time/healthy-lifestyle/29528.html?relinks>)
- 40% reported eating three to six family meal, and only one-fourth reported eating seven or more family meals a week (www.sheknows.com/about/look/2490.htm)
- Boys are more likely to show up for family meals, along with younger children (www.sheknows.com/about/look/2490.htm)
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Resources

- www.sheknows.com/about/look/2490.htm
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- <http://family.samhsa.gov/get/mealtime.aspx>

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