



## **Feature Article:**

### ***Healthy Eating with the Family***

When is the last time you sat down and ate a meal with your family? If you cannot remember, then starting this new year of 2016 is a great time to start having a meal with your family as often as you can.

There have been research that when families eat together, meals are likely to be more nutritious and kids who eat regularly with their families are less likely to snack on unhealthy foods and are more likely to eat fruits, vegetables, and whole grains! Beyond healthy and nutrition, family meals provide a valuable opportunity for children and parents to reconnect. When adults, children and teenagers eat together children do better in school, have fewer behavioral problems, and communication improves. Check out below the following tips to make family meals happen at your house.

#### **Tips on How to Have More Family Meals:**

##### **Schedule Family Meals.**

- To plan more family meals, look over the calendar and choose a time when everyone can be there. Figure out which obstacles are getting in the way of family meals and see if there are ways to work around them.
- Even if it is only once a week, making it a habit to have family meals once a week is a great start and you can work your way up to 2 to 3 times a week.
- Don't forget that breakfast and lunch are meals as well; there are no rules that say family meals should only happen in the evening

##### **Prepare Meals Ahead of Time.**

- It is important to make a shopping list and make time to go to the grocery store so you have foods on hand to create meals.
- Try doing some prep work for meals on the weekend to get ready for the week ahead. On a night when you have extra time, cook double and put one meal in the freezer so there is a backup plan for busy nights.
- Remember that a meal at home does not have to be complicated or take a long time.

### **Involve Kids at Family Meals.**

- Family meals can be fun and it is important to involve kids in them.
- Younger kids can put plates on the table, pour beverages, or fold napkins.
- Older kids can get ingredients, wash produce, mix, and stir. You could even have your teens be the cook for a night and you could be their helper in the kitchen.

During mealtime, make your time at the table pleasant and enjoy being together as a family. Remember to keep your interactions positive at the table. Ask your kids about their days and tell them about yours. Give everyone a chance to talk. If you cannot remember the last time you sat down for a family meal, take the time this year to start a family tradition of eating together and eating better.

Keep the interactions positive and let the conversation flow. Ask your kids about their days and tell them about yours. Give everyone a chance to talk.

### **Need some conversation starters? Here are a few:**

1. If you could have any food for dinner tomorrow night, what would it be?
2. Who can guess how many potatoes I used to make that bowl of mashed potatoes?
3. What's the most delicious food on the table?
4. If you opened a restaurant, what kind would it be?
5. Who is the best cook you know? (We hope they say it's you!)

Want to learn more about nutrition and healthy meals then check out about the Living Healthy Family Nutrition Counseling service. For more information go to <http://www.livinghealthy1.org/store>