Healthy Eating Starts With Parents

Modeling healthy eating supports the development of healthy behaviors in children. Here are a few healthy eating habits parents can role model for their children:

- Never skip meals—especially breakfast.
- Take moderate portions.
- Limit junk food in the house.
- Drink water and milk instead of soda.
- Eat foods from all food groups—milk, fruit, vegetables, whole grains and lean meats, fish & beans.
- Try fruit and yogurt for dessert.

Teaching Healthy Habits at Mealtime

Children won’t perceive healthy eating as important if it is not something that they see you doing.

- Eat the way you want your child to eat—try new foods together but don’t force your children to try them.
- Avoid emphasizing “good” and “bad” foods—teach your child that he or she needs to balance nutritious food with fun snacks.
- Show ways for managing stress that do not include eating.
- Encourage your kids to help prepare meals, set the table and help with dishes.
- Enjoy your meals—positive attitudes are contagious!

For more ideas on healthy family meals, visit HealthyEating.org.
Benefits of Family Meals

Eating meals as a family plays a key role in raising high-achieving, healthy and well-adjusted children.

**Improved Academic Achievement**
- Frequent family meals are linked with being successful in school, including getting better grades and scoring higher on achievement tests.

**Better Nutrition**
- Family meals contribute to higher daily intakes of important nutrients like calcium, fiber, iron, vitamins B6 and B12, C and E, and less overall dietary fat.

**Higher Self-Esteem**
- Mealtime conversation brings the family together, promotes positive self-esteem in children and starts a lasting and positive relationship with food.

**Making Mealtime Family Time**
Family meals should be dynamic—an exchange of ideas, conversation and feelings. Mealtime is a wonderful opportunity to strengthen family ties and pass on family cultural traditions.
- Eat together as a family whenever possible.
- Keep mealtime pleasant—avoid power struggles over what gets eaten, and remember that mealtime is not a time for discipline.
- Turn off the TV, video games, mobile phones and the computer.
- Use conversation-starters to get children talking, such as “What is the best thing that happened today at school?”

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