



Eating Together: A Dietary Guideline for 2005

As the health and nutrition community works to prepare the next Dietary Guidelines for Americans, perhaps a good look at the impact of planning to eat meals together should be considered. The impact for better general health and nutritional well-being related to this activity is worth billions to our country.

Certainly it takes time, thought and skills to eat well in general. Eating on the fly doesn't make it simpler. Adding the personal and family goal of eating together, taking time to enjoy shared meals a minimum of 5 times weekly is no more challenging than other quantitative dietary goals we have offered Americans in past Dietary Guidelines.

Join with your local family and consumer sciences and nutrition educators to plan, promote and convey this lifestyle goal to our communities and nutrition leaders.

Abbreviated bibliography:

1. Frequency of family meals is positively associated with intake of fruits, vegetables, grains, and calcium-rich foods and negatively associated with soft drink consumption (less were consumed). *Family meal patterns: Associations with socio-demographic characteristics and improved dietary intake among adolescents.* Neumark-Sztainer, Dianne; Hannan, Peter J.; Story, Mary; Croll, Jillian and Perry, Cheryl. **Journal of The American Dietetic Association.** 2003; 103:317-322.
2. Family dinners linked to healthful diets in teens, preteens. *Family Dinner and Diet Quality Among Older Children and Adolescents.* Gillman, Matthew W.; Rifas-Shiman, Sherly; Frazier, A. Lindsay et al. **Archives of Family Medicine.** American Medical Association. 2000;9:235-240.
3. *The Diets of America's Children: Influences of Dining Out, Household Characteristics, and Nutrition Knowledge.* Lin, BH, Guthrie J, Blaylock JR. USDA Agricultural Economic Report 746. USDA, Washington, DC. 1996.
4. "Your child will read better; mealtimes together develops their vocabulary."
Catherine Snow, Ph.D.,-Harvard's Grad .School of Education
5. Table time gives children a regular time to talk with parent(s) and parents with them. Improves family and peer relationships, school success and drug use less likely when families eat together a minimum of five times weekly.
Blake Bowden, Ph.D.—Cincinnati Children's Hospital. Archived topic: Family Time. www.cincinnatichildrens.org
6. People are likely to eat more nutritious meals when eating with someone else. *Special report: The Breakdown of the Family Meal.* Tufts U. Health & Nutrition Letter. July, 1991.
7. Preparing meals together teaches children self-reliance and to share responsibility for personal and family health and environment. *Diet Quality and the Eating Environment of Preschool Children.* Kaye Stanek, U. of Nebraska. Journal of the American Dietetic Association. 1990. pp1582-1584.
8. More benefits and bibliography: ***Eat Together, Eat Better*** — www.nutrition.wsu.edu

by Sharon P. Davis, FACS Education