



# Benefits of Eating Together

Regular family meals are good for children and teens!

## Eating together...

...encourages family togetherness

- Positive mealtimes help family members know each other and feel that they belong to one another.
- When children can count on regular time with a parent or other adults, they feel loved, safe, and secure.
- Children set roots for a lifetime as they experience their family's values and traditions.

*I like eating at home with my parents. Especially when my dad is there. It makes me feel like I matter to them. That's when we talk because we're looking at each other. It's not the same eating in the car.*

## Eating together...

...fosters happy, well-adjusted kids

- Teenagers are less likely to smoke cigarettes, use marijuana, use illegal drugs, and drink alcohol.
- Teens are less likely to be depressed and generally have better self-esteem.
- Kids can feel accepted by their family and may not need to seek approval from the wrong crowd.

## Eating together...

...helps kids do better in school

- Listening to grown-ups at the table exposes children to new words which helps them read better.
  - Table talk gives youth a safe place to express their ideas. They gain confidence to speak up in class.
    - Parents are more likely to know about deadlines for homework, upcoming test days, and ways they can be involved with how their children are doing in school.

## Eating together...

...provides better nutrition

- Family meals provide nutrients that kids need to grow strong and healthy, such as calcium, fiber, and iron.
- Dinners at home are more likely to include nutrient-rich foods from all five food groups: vegetable, fruit, milk, grain, and meat & beans. They are less likely to have too much fat and sugar.
- Cooking together teaches children and teens how to plan meals and prepare food — and how to clean up!

## Eating together...

...helps prevent weight problems

- Children and teens are less likely to be overweight since they learn to eat healthful meals.
- Teens make better food choices when they are eating away from home.
- Teens are less likely to have eating disorders like anorexia or bulimia.

## Eating together...

...saves time and money

- Food dollars go farther when making larger family "batches" than buying individual or fast food meals.
- By cooking extra food for another meal, "planned-overs" can save time in the kitchen and money, too.
- Eating a home-cooked meal can be faster than driving to a restaurant, ordering, eating, and driving home.

## Eating together...

...is enjoyable!

- Kids like eating with their families! Teens may not show it but they say they enjoy family meals.
- Parents and other family members savor the good times with their kids at the table.
- Laughter at the table makes mealtime fun!

*At first it was a little awkward but we eventually got very used to eating together and started to look forward to it. We have family meals as often as time warrants now which is four or five times a week. It is not only a good excuse to spend time with family, but a time to reflect on nutrition and eating good meals.*