

**Eating Smart & Moving More
Celebrating Healthy Families**

Eating Smart

**Five Easy Ways to
Enjoy More Mealtimes
Together**

Plan ONE MORE family mealtime in every week.

Take a quick inventory of how many times you usually eat together now. Then plan to add just one more family mealtime per week. If dinnertime is too hectic, add a leisurely weekend breakfast or lunch. After a month or two of this new pattern, you can then add another family meal each week. Before you know it, you and your family will be eating together at least five times every week.

Plan TASTY MENUS for family meals together.

If you think that putting a meal together has to be hard or take a lot of time, think again! The best meals are simple, tasty and planned together. Let everyone choose a favorite menu for one day. Even small children can pick a main dish (like tacos or pasta), a vegetable (green salad or cooked carrots) and fruit for dessert (sliced apples or canned peaches in juice).

Plan to set a SPECIAL TABLE for family meals.

Food is just one important part of mealtime. There are many other ways to set the mood for an enjoyable and relaxed time around the table together. A little extra attention to the actual table setting (with very little expense) can add a lot to mealtime mood. Some ideas that don't cost a lot include a candle, some colored napkins or wipe-clean, plastic placemats for children.

Plan to ENJOY CONVERSATION at the table.

Many mealtime benefits come from the conversations that families have while eating together. Children learn new words from the adults. Adults are able to share family values with the next generation. Talk about things that are positive and allow everyone to participate. Even toddlers like to offer their opinions on topics like *“what is your favorite color”* or *“what made you laugh today.”*

Plan to TURN OFF THE TV and telephones.

Loud television noise and multiple phone calls can upset anyone's mealtime routine. This makes it hard to eat or carry on a conversation. The solution is simple: make mealtime a TV- and phone-free zone (except for emergencies, of course). Turn off the distractions for just 30 minutes. Imagine you are eating at a nice restaurant. Play some soothing background music at low volume.



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