

# Making the Most of Family Meals

---

## Why are family meals important?

- ❖ Sharing meals is an opportunity for meaningful time together
- ❖ The feelings of bonding and support that comes from being together is what makes family meals so valuable
- ❖ Family meals, especially at home, tend to be healthier and less expensive

## Benefits of Family Meals

- ❖ Increase in emotional connections
- ❖ Improved communication
- ❖ Improved emotional and social well-being
- ❖ Academic success
- ❖ Reduced risky behaviors
- ❖ Increase in fruit and vegetable consumption
- ❖ Lowered risk of obesity
- ❖ Lowered risk for eating disorders

## Strategies for Improving Family Meals

- ❖ Make family meals a priority
- ❖ Be creative and flexible
- ❖ Turn off the television and put away electronic devices
- ❖ Involve children in menu planning
- ❖ Use ChooseMyPlate.gov to plan healthy meals
- ❖ Involve children in preparing, cooking and clean-up
- ❖ Avoid making too many rules at mealtime
- ❖ Use conversation starters and practice taking turns speaking
- ❖ Enjoy one another's company

## Example Conversation Starters (<https://thefamilydinnerproject.org/conversation/>)

- ❖ If you had superpowers, what would they be and how would you use them to help people?
- ❖ Think about two things for which you felt thankful or grateful for today.
- ❖ What motivates you to work hard at school? What doesn't motivate you, and how can we change it?
- ❖ Talk about a time when you felt really embarrassed.
- ❖ If you could change one thing about your family or about school, what would it be?
- ❖ What are 3 things you're good at doing that took a lot of hard work and practice?
- ❖ Have you ever seen someone bullied? What did you do? What could you do different next time?
- ❖ If you were free to do anything you wanted all day, what would you do?
- ❖ How do you know you can trust another person?
- ❖ Do you know any stories about your grandparents when they were kids?

## Strategies for Picky Eaters

- ❖ Create a routine: Eat meals and snacks at consistent times
- ❖ Introduce new foods, but give your child time to adjust
- ❖ Use shapes and designs to encourage eating a new food
- ❖ Set an example by eating a variety of foods

## Additional Resources

- ❖ Planning Healthy Meals: <https://www.choosemyplate.gov/families>
- ❖ Avoiding Food Battles: <https://www.ellynsatterinstitute.org/how-to-feed/the-division-of-responsibility-in-feeding/>
- ❖ National Family Meals Month: <https://www.fmi.org/family-meals-month>