



Why family dinner?



What if there was one change you could make to improve your kids' vocabulary, resilience and self-esteem, while decreasing their likelihood of eating disorders, teen pregnancy and substance abuse? What if just one change could boost their physical, social-emotional and academic development?

PHYSICAL BENEFITS



- Greater consumption of vital nutrients from fruits and vegetables and less soda consumption
- Lower rates of obesity
- Lower caloric intake, associated with home cooking as compared to restaurant equivalents
- Better cardiovascular health in teenagers
- Reduction of asthma symptoms
- Greater likelihood of eating healthier diets when they're on their own as young adults
- Greater likelihood of not being obese as young adults

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL BENEFITS



- Higher self-esteem, resilience and a more positive outlook on the future
- Lower rates of substance abuse, teen pregnancy, behavioral problems in school, and depression
- Better able to bounce back from cyberbullying
- Better body image
- Having 5 or more family meals per week lowered girls' risk of developing an eating disorder by 30%.
- A survey of almost 5,000 ethnically diverse adolescents found that teens who had regular family dinner had less disordered eating, particularly related to dieting and binge eating

ACADEMIC BENEFITS



- Better grades
- A Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) study found that adolescents who ate dinner with their families (3 to 5 times per week) were twice as likely to get As in school compared to classmates who rarely ate dinner with family.
- Ability to have complex conversations
- Conversation at table is greater vocabulary enhancer in preschoolers than reading aloud to them
- Higher reading scores in school-aged children

But in spite of all these benefits, many families are not eating together:



- 90% of parents say that family dinners are important for the health and welfare of their kids
- 20% of meals are eaten in the car
- From 1999 to 2010, the percentage of low income youth eating dinner together 5 or more times a week decreased from 47% to 39%. Among higher income families there was an increase from 56% to 61% during that same decade. In general, about 50% of American families are having regular family dinners
- An average of 70% of meals are eaten out of the home
- 69% of Americans report that some other activity is competing with the typical family dinner, particularly watching television and 58% of Americans report some type of technology or entertainment-related distraction