

## Eat Better Together



**H**as daily life become so busy that you no longer have family meals? Juggling work and family time is a challenge for many families, especially if you have children. Sitting down together as a family to eat a meal in the morning or evening has terrific benefits for both kids and adults.

### Did you know?

It is estimated that Canadians spend an average of twenty minutes to prepare their evening meal. That's OK!

- ① Build meals around convenient, healthy foods such as bagged salads, pre-chopped veggies and fruit, marinated tofu or grilling meats, fish, or pick up a roasted chicken.
- ① Involve the whole family—partner and kids—in preparing the meal; peeling, chopping, stirring, or setting the table. These skills are often not learned at school.
- ① Keep meals simple—they don't have to be complicated or fancy to be nutritious.
- ① Having take out again? Even if the meal isn't as healthy as if it were home-cooked, there are still benefits to sitting down and eating together.



### Children who eat with their family at least once a day:

- ☺ Have a sense of belonging and security
- ☺ See their parents model healthy eating
- ☺ Perform and behave better at school
- ☺ Have and enjoy the opportunity to talk with other members in your family
- ☺ Are less likely to smoke, use drugs, drink alcohol or attempt suicide
- ☺ Eat more nutritious foods
- ☺ Enjoy greater vocabulary

### Adults who eat with their family at least once a day:

- ☺ Save money by eating out less often
- ☺ Eat more important nutrients such as calcium, fibre and iron
  - ☺ Have the opportunity to model healthy eating to their children
  - ☺ Tend to eat more vegetables and fruit and fewer fried foods
  - ☺ Establish some traditions around food and meals
  - ☺ Have more family time
  - ☺ Drink less soda pop

**It's proven! Both kids and adults benefit when families eat together.**

## Top-notch family meals

**T**aking the time to have a family meal is a good investment for a healthy family. Try these tips for great family meals:



- ☛ Decide as a family that it is important to eat together, and then schedule at least one family meal each day.
- ☛ Let the telephone go to the answering machine.
- ☛ Turn the TV off—if there is something you feel you have to watch, tape it for later viewing.

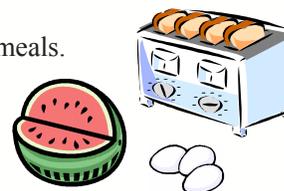


- ☛ Ask for help in menu planning, grocery shopping and preparing the meals. Young children like to eat food they have helped to prepare.
- ☛ Keep meal times pleasant. Parents need to offer children safe, healthy food. Children can decide whether or not to eat the food and how much.
- ☛ Give each family member a chance to speak—share the highlights of the day.

Ask for help with grocery shopping

## Ideas for fast meals

- ① Have the ingredients handy for two to three quick, easy meals.
- ① Have a few stand-by meals for when life is really hectic—like eggs, toast, fruit, and a glass of milk.
- ① Try to prepare meals from food you have on hand.
- ① Ask for your family's help in getting the meal ready.
- ① Cook in quantity and then freeze the extras. Thaw and add a salad.



## Kid-approved quick and easy meals

- ☑ **Pita pizzas.** Make with assorted sliced vegetables, grated mozzarella, lean meats and jarred sauce. In a pinch, wraps or buns will also work for a crust. Serve with raw veggies and a lower-fat dip.
- ☑ **Omelettes.** They're not just for breakfast. Experiment with different fillings. Serve with a salad.
- ☑ **Pasta.** Sauté vegetables, serve over pasta with a sprinkle of grated cheese. Great with a salad.



- ☑ **Wraps.** Try different combos—cheese with peppers, canned corn and beans, or even tuna. Roll them up or make a quesadilla by folding in half and heating in a pan until cheese melts. Serve with a glass of milk.
- ☑ **Chili.** Add a can of cooked beans and spices (chili powder, cumin) to spaghetti sauce for an instant chili. Serve with whole-wheat buns.
- ☑ **Sandwiches.** Everyone can build their own. Grilled cheese or tuna melts are great served with soup or a salad.

## Tap into Experts

Registered Dietitians provide food and nutrition information that you can trust. If you have a question or concern, contact: Dial-a-Dietitian: 1-800-667-3438 or [www.dialadietitian.org](http://www.dialadietitian.org)  
Dietitians of Canada: [www.dietitians.ca/eatwell](http://www.dietitians.ca/eatwell)