

Young Families

Vol. 9, 2nd Quarter

A family-focused newsletter with young children in mind

Family Meals Fuel Positive Nutrition and More

It's no secret that time is the missing ingredient in most of our lives. Families juggle busy schedules, and it's essential that family meals take priority.

Very young children usually eat their meals with at least one other person at the table. But research shows that as children grow, those family meals remain important – for nutrition, and for strengthening family ties as well.

A study done in 2000 revealed that when children in grades 4 to 6 ate with the family, the meals consisted of 50 percent more vegetables and fruits, 40 percent less soda, and lower-fat choices. In 2003, a study looking at middle and high school students found that family meals were positively associated with eating more fruits, vegetables, grains,

and calcium-rich foods.

For many families, eating dinner together can be an important way for children and parents to stay connected. A recent report by the Council of Economic Advisers noted significant differences when teens ate more family meals. The teens who ate dinner with their parents at least five times a week ate more nutritious meals and avoided risks such as smoking, drinking, violence, and poor school performance.

Like all habits, family meals are best begun at an early age. Remember, too, that the television is not a family member! Turn off the television and focus on food and family – family meals are a great investment.

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Fiber in Your Diet Is a Good Thing

Eating fiber gives you a sense of fullness, which can help you stay at a healthy body weight. Foods that are good sources of dietary fiber include fresh or cooked fruits and vegetables; legumes, such as cooked beans and lentils; nuts; and whole grain foods, such as popcorn and certain cereals and breads. Eating enough fiber also reduces problems with constipation and decreases your risk for heart disease and some kinds of cancer.

Children ages 1 to 3 years should get 19 grams of fiber each day, while 4- to 8-year-old children should try to eat 25 grams of fiber. Girls ages 9 to 18 should eat 26 grams of fiber each day, while boys ages 9 to 13 years old are encouraged to eat 31 grams of fiber each day. Older boys and men up to age 50 years should eat 38 grams of fiber. Women age 50 years and younger are advised to eat 25 grams of fiber each day. Older men and women need slightly less.

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Drink Fluids to Keep Cool, Protect Health

Heat and humidity increase the risks of dehydration for people of all ages, and children can be particularly vulnerable. They may become preoccupied with play and forget to stop for a drink of water.

Drinking six to eight 8 oz. glasses of water each day is a basic health recommendation. Health professionals recommend drinking water before and after physical activity and taking frequent breaks to replenish fluids. On humid days additional fluids are needed.

Water is the preferred "replacement" fluid. Other sources include fruits and vegetables that have a high water content such as lettuce, raw tomatoes, and watermelon.

Milk also has a high water content and is a good source of calcium that is necessary for health.

Beverages with caffeine such as coffee, tea, and some carbonated beverages are slightly dehydrating and should not be used as the sole sources of fluid replacement.

Carbonated beverages are not absorbed as easily as water and may contribute little, if any, nutritional value.

Sports drinks can be helpful during prolonged activity of 45 minutes or more.

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ParentTALK: Bring up tough issues softly

Parents, even those who do not live together, need to stay in touch with each other to deal with the many issues of raising a family. When a problem comes up, avoiding it does not make the matter go away and blaming the other parent leads nowhere.

How can a person raise an issue without the other person becoming defensive or withdrawn? When one

person wants to discuss a tough issue, bring it up softly at the proper time and without accusing the other person. For example, saying "you never help with the housework or the cooking" during the other person's favorite TV program probably will not lead to a successful discussion. Choose a more appropriate time and choose language that goes something like

this: "When I have to do all the housework and cooking, I get angry because it seems like there is no time for our family to do fun things together. Is this a good time to talk about it? If not, when would be a good time?"

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Raising Money-Smart Children

Teaching children to manage money is an important life skill. Children learn about money by what they see, hear and experience. You can help your children develop healthy money management skills by providing them with positive learning experiences.

One way to provide positive learning experiences is to pay your child an allowance. Paying an allowance shifts spending decisions to the child and reduces the need for the child to have to ask for money. It also teaches the child how to make wise spending and saving decisions.

Should you give an allowance? Giving an allowance is a personal decision. Perhaps you could give an allowance and combine it with opportunities to work for income. You could start by establishing a base allowance for each child. If a child wants more money, create a list of jobs and other duties that can be performed at will if the child wants to earn additional money. For each item on the list, consider

assigning a set amount of money and a complete description of the work to be done. Good descriptions clearly state what needs to be done and what is required for the task to be properly completed.

Keeping weekly and monthly records helps children form good work habits and develop job skills. List the dates jobs are assigned and completed. Have extra jobs available to increase earnings and savings. Encourage them to keep track of progress towards reaching their savings goals.

Here are a few ways to help build your child's confidence in making money decisions:

- Guide and supervise rather than direct and dictate.
- Praise rather than criticize.
- Let children learn by mistakes as well as successes.
- Be consistent.
- Conduct a family money management council—get family

members to agree on and work toward short- and long-range financial goals.

- Set a good example by managing money wisely and keeping good financial records.
- Learning wise money management skills at an early age yields money-smart adults.

Sources:

*Money in Our Children's Hands,
American Council of Life Insurance
How to Raise a Money-Smart Child*

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