

Family Dinner

Fun ideas to get the family involved!

Eating dinner as a family is not only a way to share a meal but to reconnect with your family after a day apart. There are many advantages to eating dinner together such as: time to talk and bond, share the events of the day, laugh and giggle and time to eat a nutritious meal. But did you know, the National Center on Addiction and Substance abuse at Columbia University has also found that eating dinner as a family can lessen the risk of children to smoke, drink and use drugs. The Center has found these findings: Children and teens that eat with their family frequently

- have half the risk for substance abuse compared to teens who dine with their family infrequently
- are less likely to have friends who use illicit drugs
- have lower levels of tension and stress in the home
- are more likely to say their parents are proud of them
- are likelier to get better grades in school
- have healthier eating habits
- are more likely to confide in their parents

Making dinner time a fun time will help the family look forward to meals together. Have the whole family help with making the meal. Picky eaters will be more likely to eat if they help make it! The meal and clean up will take less time if the family pitches in to help.

Is the conversation a little slow at the table? Here are some tips to help jump start the talk! Dinner Conversation topics: school or work, athletics, schedules, family, friends, pets, goals, politics, pop culture and weather. Or you can make it a game (works well with smaller kids) each person gets to pick a question for everyone to answer. (such as your favorite food, the best or worst thing that happened today, your favorite place to go)

Want to mix it up a bit- try these off the wall ideas:

- mix it up- or flip flop- try eating breakfast for dinner! Who says pancakes and eggs are only for the morning
- backwards dinner- start off with dessert first and then eat the main course
- picnic- lay out a blanket in the living room or backyard and have a great picnic
- finger food night- put away the silverware and eat finger foods for a meal
- travel the world- pick a food from another culture and try something new. Get the kids involved and do a little research about the culture to learn something new too!

For more fun ideas, like personalized placemats and quick recipes, visit

www.togetherfordinner.com

Jennifer Egeland, RD LD

Hen House Dietitian

