

Lesson Plan and Self-Study Module

Family Meals

Topic

- The importance of offering family meals.

Target Audience

- Parents or caregivers of children ages 1-5 years

Key Messages

- There are many health and developmental benefits of family meals
- Follow the division of responsibility with feeding children during family mealtimes

Handouts

- Brochure “Let’s Talk about Mealtime” (Purdue University)
- *Professional Fact Sheet: Family Meals*
- Handout “Feeding Children the Right Message”
- Handout “Conversation Starters”

References / Resources

1. The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University. *Family Day- A Day to Eat With Your Children*. Retrieved from <http://www.CASAFamilyDay.org> on August 9, 2006.
2. Satter, Ellyn, MS, RD, CICSW, BCD. *Make Family Meals a Priority*. Retrieved from <http://www.ellynsatter.com> on August 9, 2006.
3. Satter, Ellyn, MS, RD, CICSW, BCD. (1999) *Secrets of Feeding a Healthy Family*.
4. Iowa State University Extension. *Share Family Meals*. Retrieved from http://www.nal.usda.gov/wicworks/Learning_Center (located in WIC Food and Food Packages - Family Meals - ‘Say Yes to Family Meals’) on August 9, 2006.
5. The University of Maine Cooperative Extension. *Making the Most of Family Mealtimes (#4340)* <http://www.umext.man.edu/onlinepubs/htmpubs/4340.htm> on August 9, 2006.
6. Purdue University’s Center for Families Promoting Family Meals Project, by Emily Hutson, under the direction of Barbara Mayfield, MS, RD, director, with the Indiana State Nutrition Action Plan (SNAP) team.

Evaluation

- “What is one new thing you learned today about family meals?”
- “What are some things you want to do this week to make eating together possible?”

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1) Group Education

Lesson Plan

Materials

- Brochure “Let’s Talk about Mealtime” (Purdue University)
- *Professional Fact Sheet: Family Meals*
- Handout “Feeding Children the Right Message”
- Handout “Conversation Starters”
- Flip Chart, chalk board or dry erase board
- Food models or markers to draw food (Ice Breaker activity) and paper or paper placemats

Lesson Plan Overview

1. Introduction/Welcome/Ice Breaker
2. Definition of family meals
3. Importance of family meals
4. Barriers to having family meals
5. Tips for making family mealtimes more successful
6. Division of Responsibility (parents and children)
7. Developing a plan for making family meal time work

Methods

OPEN: Emotion-based counseling starts with provocative questions, activities or stories that lead to emotion-based conversations, not to an immediate transfer of knowledge.

- A. **Ice Breaker:** Ask participants to arrange food models into a healthy meal that they would offer their children. If possible, have children help. (Participants could also draw healthy foods on a placemat or piece of paper).

“What are your questions?” (*asking “what are your questions” instead of “do you have any questions” encourages participants to ask questions. all questions should be open-ended. pause for 5-7 seconds before continuing*)

- B. Ask participants to **introduce themselves**, their child(ren) and share any **challenges they face raising children**.

Sample responses:

- Unsafe communities: gang activity / street crime / threats of attacks
- Parents working multiple jobs with little quality time with children
- Uncertain times
- Violence on TV

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- C. “Suppose I could take out a prescription pad and write a prescription for something that would help protect your child from the scary times in which we live. Would you be interested?”

(Pause for 5-7 seconds to wait for a response. Provide affirmations even if responses are incorrect, e.g., “thank you for sharing that”.)

The prescription I would write would be this: “Eat meals together as a family”. Family meals have a great deal of power. Eating together gives you and your children a strong bond that will help them during difficult times.”

Alternative activity: Have participants introduce themselves, their child(ren) and share what family meals means to them. (Leads into “Dig” A)

DIG: During the "dig" step, the facilitator asks questions to get the learners to open up, share their memories and experiences and get closer to the topic.

Family Meals Defined

- A. **“What does family meals mean to you?”**
Encourage participants to answer. If participants are resistant to share, offer suggestions that follow using phrases such as “some people think it means...”. Ask “What else?”(rather than “Anything else?”) or try “What have you heard...”
- Who?
 - People you live with come together to eat and talk.
 - Everyone or just you and your child.
 - Where?
 - At home or away
 - What?
 - Anything, plain or fancy!

Importance of Family Meals

- B. **“Have you heard of any benefits of having meals together?”**
Encourage participants to answer.

Facilitator Background: Studies show that children who eat with their families have better eating habits, have closer family relationships, do better in school and engage in less risk-taking behaviors. A growing body of evidence suggests that another important impact of family meals may be a lower risk of child overweight. Refer to Professional FACT SHEET “Family Meals”.

Benefits of family meals (research strongly supports frequent meals, 5-7 times per week)

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Family Meals

- At 70 percent lower risk for substance abuse
- Half as likely to try cigarettes or marijuana
- One third less likely to try alcohol
- Half as likely to get drunk monthly
- Higher achievement scores
- Closer family relationships

Other benefits

- Saves money
- Provides structure in feeding/eating patterns
- Healthier eating habits (e.g., more fruits, vegetables, grains and calcium and less fried foods and soft drinks)
- Lower risk for child overweight
- Develops feeding skills
- Teaches table manners
- Encourages trying new foods

Offer “Let’s Talk About Meal Time” brochure for more information on the benefits of family meals. This may also be used to facilitate discussion from group if they remain resistant to sharing.

Additional Probing Questions that may be used to facilitate discussion:

“Are there any benefits you hadn’t thought of before?”

“Do any of these benefits surprise you?”

“Do you doubt any to be true?”

Barriers To Having Family Meals

C. “All parents have struggles with meal time.”

“What makes it difficult for your family to eat together?”

You may want to begin by offering a barrier you currently face and/or you faced in the past. Encourage participants to share their difficulties in eating together, avoid offering solutions, simply acknowledge by using reflective listening skills. Write ideas on flip chart.

Some barriers may include:

- Lack of time, conflicting schedules
- Needs a place to eat
- Lack of knowledge of cooking easy, healthy and tasty meals
- Distractions (e.g., TV, phone)
- Meal time struggles (e.g., poor table manners, picky eating, running from table, not hungry at mealtime)
- Hard to change established habits/behaviors (e.g., older children)

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Tips For Making Family Mealtimes More Successful

D. “How can busy parents find time to make family meal times more successful?”

Encourage participants to answer by connecting barriers listed in “B” to possible solutions. If participants are resistant to share, offer ideas that follow using phrases such as “some parents say family meal time is easier when they...”, or “How do you feel about....”

Some ideas/suggestions may include:

- Make them routine
- Be patient, trust yourself and trust your child
- Plan ahead – at least 3x/week and involve your children
- Keep mealtimes pleasant, provide good and positive company and conversation
- Excuse children from the table when they start playing more than eating, usually meal time will only last 20 – 30 minutes
- Avoid distractions – turn off the TV, avoid talking on the phone, turn down the music
- Have everyone in the family help with mealtime; e.g., have a chores chart or calendar with who is going to help set the table, help with foods (getting items out of the cupboard, refrigerator, stirring, measuring, etc.), and then do the clean up (clear the table, help with dishes, etc.)
- Follow the Division of Responsibility

Division of Responsibility

Offer “Feeding Children the Right Message” handout. This may be helpful in facilitating discussion on using the Division of Responsibility to make meal times more pleasant.

“What do you think are the parents’ responsibilities with meal time?”

- Offering balanced meals and routine snacks
- Eating with your child and offering everyone the same thing to eat
- Avoid making “special” meals because you think your child won’t eat
- Steer clear of commenting on your child’s eating habits at the table; focus on something else and they will eat once the focus/attention is taken off of their eating/not eating
- Make mealtimes pleasant; don’t use mealtimes to scold or nag children

Offer “Conversation Starters” handout. This may be helpful to parents in starting pleasant meal time conversations.

“What are your child’s responsibilities when it comes to eating and family mealtimes?”

- *Whether to eat (or not) and how much to eat from what you offer them (refer to handout).*

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CONNECT: During the "connect" step, parents connect the conversation topic with their values, attitudes, beliefs and feelings. The facilitator helps parents reflect on their personal needs and wants and connects them to the health-related behaviors being suggested.

A. "Think for a moment about the meal that you put together when you first arrived today" Use the following bold questions to begin a conversation about the meals they put together/drew.

B. **Why did you draw/put together the meal you did?**

Are there any memories associated with this meal?

Do you consider it is a healthy meal?

Is it something you would like to share as a tradition with your family?

Additional Probing Questions that may be used to facilitate discussion:

"What memories of your family meals do you hope your children will cherish?"

ACT: During this "step" the facilitator helps the participants identify specific action steps and build confidence to help them be the parent they want to be.

Develop A Plan For Making Meal Times Work

A. Without a lot of additional effort or time, simply eating together as a family could actually change the direction of your child's and family's life.

"What's for dinner at your house this week—and who will be enjoying it with you?"

"What are some things you want to do this week to make eating together possible?"

"Think of how you can adapt your schedules to make family meals more frequent."

Evaluation: *Using the brochure "Let's Talk About Mealttime" encourage participants set a goal and idea to help make family meals a priority. Encourage participants to share what idea they will try first or something new they learned today.*

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2) Self-Study Module (SSM)

Procedures

Agencies must have a procedure for using SSM, PPM NE 5.2

Methods

1. Give the participant the handouts “Let’s Talk about Mealtime” and “Feeding Children the Right Message”
2. Ask the participant to review the handouts. Then encourage them to use “Let’s Talk about Mealtime” brochure to set goals that encourage family meals.
3. When the participant has set their goals, ask them what questions they have and if they would like to talk to a CHP about any of the information covered or any other information.

***** This SSM is not yet translated. Notification will be sent when the Spanish version is available.



“Feeding Children the Right Message”

As great parents/caregivers you can decide the what, when and where of feeding.

This means that you can:

- offer healthy meals and snacks at the same time each day
- limit eating between meals and snacks, offer water
- eat with your child
- eat the same things as your child
- avoid making “special” meals because you think your child won’t eat

- let your child decide how much to eat—
 - avoid food battles and bribery
- let your 2 year old serve himself or let him know that he does not have to eat it all and there is more if he wants it.
- keep conversation positive— avoid commenting on eating (good or bad)
- turn off the TV






Your child also has some responsibilities, they can decide how much & whether to eat.

This means your children can:

- decide whether or not to eat
- decide how much to eat
- be open to trying new foods
- make do with less favorite foods
- be pleasant at the table
- stay seated at the table during snack and meal time
- grow the way nature intended



What to offer your child

At Meals	At Snack Time	Between Meals and Snacks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> milk in a 3-4 oz glass (You drink milk too) <input type="checkbox"/> bread <input type="checkbox"/> one other starch (rice, pasta, potatoes) <input type="checkbox"/> fruit & a vegetable (or 2 fruits or 2 vegetables) <input type="checkbox"/> protein food <input type="checkbox"/> variety of low, medium and high fat foods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> offer juice or milk with the snack <input type="checkbox"/> let her eat as much as she is hungry for <p>*(kids need to eat every 2-3 hours)</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> don't offer food, juice or milk between meals and snacks <input type="checkbox"/> offer water often between meals and snacks 



With the right messages children learn to eat when they are hungry, stop when they are full, and to try a variety of food.

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make **mealtime** family time

Our family mealtime goal:

The idea we will try first:

Once an idea you try becomes easy to do, pick a new one from the list inside.

Visit the Promoting Family Meals Web site at

www.cfs.purdue.edu/CFF/promotingfamilymeals

for these helpful resources:



- Calendars for menu planning and goal setting
- Menu ideas and recipes
- Conversation starters
- Ideas to eliminate mealtime battles
- Fact sheets and reference lists for family meal research findings

This material was developed by Purdue University's Center for Families Promoting Family Meals Project, Purdue Extension, and the Indiana State Nutrition Action Plan (SNAP) Team, reaching participants served by the Family Nutrition Program (FNP), the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP), the Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), the Indiana Department of Education, and the Parent Teacher Association.

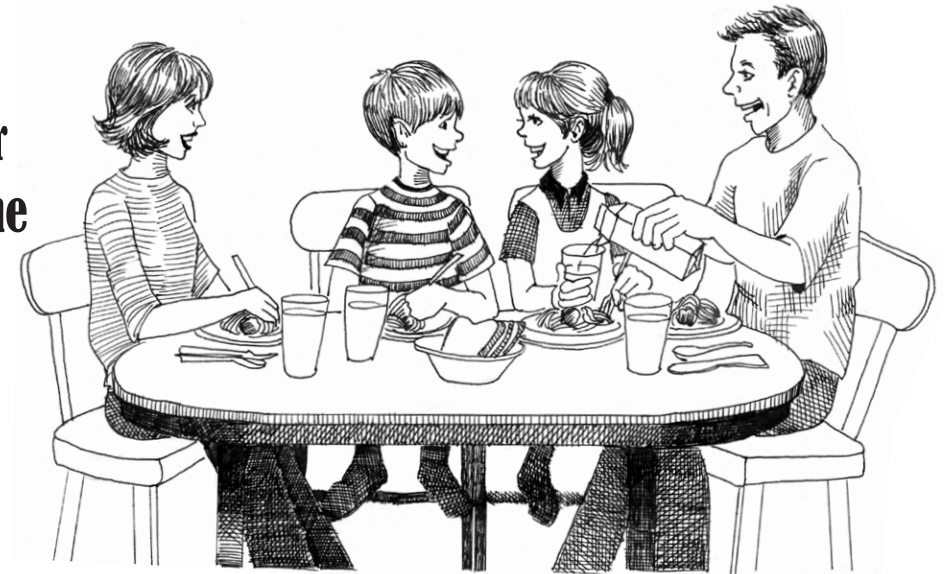
Purdue University Cooperative Extension Service, FSSA and USDA are equal opportunity/equal access/affirmative action institutions.

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11/06

Let's Talk About Mealtime ...

**Mealtime
can be your
family's time
for sharing
good food,
laughter,
and love.**



A "family meal" is when the people you live with come together to eat and talk. It can include everyone or it can be just you and your child. Family meals don't

have to be fancy, and they can be eaten at home or away. They are best when you can talk and listen to each other away from the noise of the television.

Would you like your family's meals to be easier? More often? More pleasant?

Discover how meals can be a wonderful time to stay close to your family.

Sharing meals builds stronger, healthier families in many ways.

What do these benefits mean to YOU?



Closer families

Family meals are a great place to share your daily lives and laughter, and to pass down your values and traditions. Family meals make children feel like they belong and are loved. Families who eat together enjoy it and discover that it becomes easier the more often they do it.

Smarter children

Children who eat with their families do better in school. They learn how to be polite and get along with others. Talking at meals teaches children new words, how to express ideas, and how to talk with others.



Stronger children

Children who eat with their parents are less likely to smoke, drink, take drugs, get into fights, become sexually active, or commit suicide. Start the family meal habit when your children are young and keep it up through their teen years.



Healthier children

Children who eat with their families eat better, learn better eating habits, and are less likely to develop eating disorders. Eating family meals can help children reach a healthy weight.



Set a goal to make family meals work for you.

Chose a goal from this column.

Choose an idea from this column that goes with your goal.

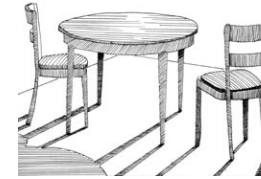
Write your goal and idea on the next page.

Find time for family meals.



1. Think about when your family could eat together this week.
2. Plan days and times to eat together.
3. Eat together ____ times this week.
4. Commit to eating together as a family ____ times every week.

Find good places to eat together.



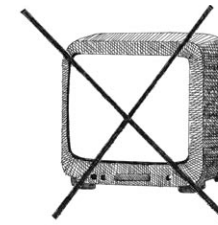
1. Think of where you can eat meals together at home and away.
2. Get a place ready to eat as a family.
3. Eat ____ meals this week at your place for family meals.
4. Try a new location for a meal this week.

Eat easy, healthy, and tasty meals.



1. Think of a meal your family likes that's quick and healthy.
2. Make a shopping list for a family meal.
3. Get your family to help with shopping, cooking, and cleanup.
4. Try a new recipe or menu idea.

Focus on our family, not the TV.



1. Think of why it's good to eat away from the TV and talk together.
2. Pick ____ meals to eat away from the TV this week.
3. Try conversation starters to get your family talking.
4. Turn off the TV during meals ____ times this week.

Enjoy family time together.



1. Think about what makes family meals pleasant.
2. Learn about parent and child roles to avoid mealtime battles.
3. Be a role model for how you want your child to behave.
4. Have a special theme meal.

FACT SHEET
for professional use only

Family Meals

Why Focus on Family Meals?

Family Meals should be a priority for several reasons. Sitting down together and turning off the television for a family meal provides structure in feeding/eating patterns for children and allows an opportunity for family communication, providing closer family relationships. From infancy on, participating in family mealtimes creates an environment for children to develop feeding skills, learn table manners, and try new foods. Studies show that children who eat with their families eat more fruits and vegetables, whole grains, lean meats and low fat dairy products. Also, as children become adolescents, it has been found they are less likely to partake in negative behaviors and do better in school if they have family mealtimes. New evidence suggests that another important impact of family meals may be a lower risk of child overweight.

Facts about Family Meals:

gIn 2001, The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA), started *Family Day* as an annual event to promote family mealtimes. Family Day is celebrated the fourth Monday in September.

gCASA research found teens who ate dinner with their families *less than two nights a week* were:

- Y**four times more likely to smoke cigarettes
- Y**three times more likely to smoke marijuana
- Y**nearly twice as likely to drink
- Y**more likely to have sex at a younger age and get into fights

gOther studies with adolescents found participating in family dinners was associated with regular eating habits and healthful dietary patterns, including more grains, calcium-rich foods, fruits and vegetables, and less fried foods and sodas. In addition, higher intakes of fiber, calcium, folate, iron, vitamins A, B₆, C and E were also found.

gThe frequency of family meals has decreased from 89.2% (1972) to 75.9 % (1994).

gOpportunities for family meals have been negatively affected by societal changes, such as increased after-school activities, changes in family structure and living arrangements, increased availability of convenience foods, and increased eating outside of the home.

gFamily meals support children's food acceptance and internal regulation with eating (Division of Responsibility).

gFamily meals are the single strongest predictor of higher achievement scores and fewer behavioral problems. Also, family meals are more related to psychological and academic success than studying, church, sports, art, or music.

Tips for Counseling on Family Meals:

1. **Make family meals a daily routine.**

Any time--breakfast, lunch, dinner, and snack times eaten together teaches children the importance of good eating behaviors and allows the parent to make better planned food choices.

2. **Plan ahead.**

Spend more time enjoying the family mealtime than preparing a fancy meal. Suggest simple and quick meal ideas, as long as they are eating as a family. Stress the importance of not being a short order cook and the family should all be offered the same meal.

3. **Keep mealtimes pleasant.**

Eat with your child; be a role model. Avoid scolding, nagging or negative comments at mealtimes. Use this time to talk about family activities, planning future meals, or be creative and have mealtime topic ideas (i.e. If you had \$10 what would you buy?, What colors are we eating tonight?, If you could be an animal what would you be?, or What is your favorite activity/game?)

4. **Avoid distractions.**

Turn of the television, loud music, and let the answering machine get the phone calls or ask them to call back later. Mealtime is for family members to communicate and pay attention to ones eating (hunger/satiety).

5. **Emphasize Division of Responsibility.**

Emphasize the Division of Responsibility. Parents determine the 'when' to have mealtime, 'what' to offer, and 'where' mealtime will happen. The child will then determine 'how much' or 'whether' to eat. Encourage the parent/caregiver to allow the child to serve him/herself; if this isn't possible then ask the child how much they want.

6. **Family meals from beginning to end.**

Besides eating together; family mealtime includes teaching children to help with setting the table, doing simple food preparation, turning off the t.v., washing hands and helping with clean up after the meal.

Resources:

1. The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University. *Family Day-A Day to Eat With Your Children*. Retrieved from <http://www.CASAFamilyDay.org> on August 9, 2006.
2. Gillman MW, Rifas-Shiman SL, Frazier L, Rockett HR, Camargo CA, Field AE, Berkey CS, Colditz GA. Family dinner and diet quality among older children and adolescents. *Arch Fam Med*. 2000; 9:235-240.
3. Neumark-Sztainer D, Hannan PJ, Story M, Croll J, Perry C. Family meal patterns: Associations with sociodemographic characteristics and improved dietary intake among adolescents. *J Am Diet Assoc*. 2003; 103:317-322.
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6. Satter, Ellyn, MS, RD, CICSW, BCD. *Make Family Meals a Priority*. Retrieved from <http://www.ellynsatter.com> on August 9, 2006.
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