



# kids quest health

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## Family Meal Time

Family mealtime is a great way to connect as a family. Unplugging from electronics and turning off the television can help your family to focus on their food and conversation. You may feel like your family is running hectically from sports practice to piano lessons, so taking time to have a family meal can have many benefits.

You and your kids are more likely to eat healthy when you plan and eat a family meal together. Your kids are more likely to eat fruits, vegetables, and whole grains when they see their parents eat the same during meals. Family meals reduce the consumption of high fat, high sodium, and sugar sweetened beverages. If you and your family eat and cook at home, you're all more likely to eat reasonable portion sizes rather than the colossal portions at restaurants. All of these nutritional benefits can lead to less weight gain and associated diseases.

Eating at home can also have financial benefits. The more you have meals at home, which typically cost less than the average restaurant meal, the more money you will keep in your family's piggy bank.

Family meals allow families to connect. You may be more likely to identify problems your kids may have in school or socially when you spend family mealtime together. Your kids will likely talk more and your family can develop great communication and even better memories!

## SMART SNACKING

For many families snacking has become a daily routine and this isn't necessarily a bad thing as it keeps our body constantly fueled with energy and nutrients. However, extra snacking does mean extra calories, which can often lead to weight gain. Most of this weight gain is a result of eating highly processed foods that are high in sugar with little or no nutritional value. If your family likes to snack consider the following guidelines.

- 1) Keep healthy snacks such as fruits, vegetables, low-fat yogurt, and nuts readily available so that those are the go to snack foods. Wash and cut fruits and vegetables after bringing them home from the store and bag everything in single serving portions so they are ready to grab and go.
- 2) We often eat what is in front of us. Make those healthy snacks easily visible with the sweeter snacks more hidden.
- 3) Make a rule that all snacks have to be able to fit in your child's hand.
- 4) Buy portioned sized snacks or pre-portion snacks yourself to limit the amount consumed.
- 5) Hunger is often mistaken for thirst. Encourage your child to drink a glass of water before eating any snacks.



## At Home Health

*Here's a health lesson that you can do at home with the whole family no matter what your child's age.*

### Rare, Sometimes, Always

Write down the name of any food you can think of on a sticky note with each sticky note only having one food listed on it. Then lay out a sheet of red, yellow, and green construction paper. If the item is something that is unhealthy and should only rarely be eaten, have your child place it on the red paper. If the item is something that can be eaten more regularly but not every day it gets placed on the yellow paper as a "sometimes" food. Lastly, if the item is something that can be eaten in large amounts on a regular basis, it would get placed on the green paper as a food that can always be eaten. (Examples: fruits and vegetables.) Then hang the papers where they are easily visible.

Variation: Instead of using sticky notes and different colored papers, using three paper plates, have your child outline one plate in red, one in yellow, and one in green. In the center of those plates then, have them draw foods that would belong on those plates.



# When is the best time for children to do their homework?

In a perfect world children would do their homework as soon as they get home from school because the material is fresh on their mind. However, depending on your individual child, s/he may also need a break from schoolwork to go play and get some exercise. Studies have shown that students perform their best academically immediately following some form of exercise. Parents know their children best, if they can handle going immediately into their homework then great, but if they need a break from school work encourage them to play and be active for thirty to sixty minutes before getting started. The important factor is not necessarily when they do their homework, but that they have a designated time each day that they are given and expected to complete their homework. Just be sure that after they complete their homework that they are not spending the rest of the evening watching television and being sedentary.

## Homework Hints:

- ❖ Make sure students have a quiet and well-lit area.
- ❖ Have a specific time marked off for homework.
- ❖ Show an interest in their work. If they see you are interested they are much more likely to be interested themselves.
- ❖ Find ways to relate their homework to real life experiences.
- ❖ Don't allow them to do their work in front of the television and eliminate as many distractions as possible.
- ❖ Consider having an outside area where your child can do homework.
- ❖ Go over homework upon completion to check for understanding.
- ❖ Make homework time a family work or reading time. If your child sees you working or reading while they are, it will not only eliminate distractions but also reinforce the importance of being a lifelong reader.

## Consider This

Do you have a hungry eater with a big appetite in your home? Consider letting your hungry eater eat as much as they want, within reason, as long as half of everything they eat is fruits and vegetables.

**“Physical fitness is not only one of the most important keys to a healthy body, it is the basis of dynamic and creative intellectual activity”.**

- John F. Kennedy



## Simple Switches

Try some of these simple food switches. They're quick and easy changes but can have a big impact on your families health.

**Oatmeal or Steel Cut Oats for sugary Cereals.** Boxed cereals are usually full of added sugars and preservatives.

Make your own plain oatmeal at home and sweeten it with natural sweeteners, nut butters, and/or fruit.



**Real Butter for Margarine.** Margarine spreads may be advertised as 'healthier' but they actually almost all contain trans fats which are not good for your heart health. Use the real stuff, but use it sparingly.

**100% Pure Maple Syrup for Regular Syrup.** Regular syrup has many added sugar and ingredients and is processed. While if you look at the ingredients on a maple syrup bottle, the only ingredient is maple syrup.



## Helpful Hint

Did you know the number one sign of dehydration is hunger? Our bodies often confuse dehydration with

hunger. Many students have difficulty performing in the classroom because they feel tired or hungry, both of which could be signs of dehydration. Besides making sure your child has a balanced breakfast with protein, healthy fat, and carbohydrates be sure your child is having water first thing in the morning and throughout the day. This way they are ready for success in the classroom.