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## Research Shows Importance of Family Meals

**Eau Claire, WI –September 13, 2019–** It may not be surprising that when families eat meals together at home, kids eat better. But there are many more benefits of family meals! Research has found that when families eat together more often, kids also tend to:

- ✓ have a healthy weight,
- ✓ be more confident,
- ✓ do better in school,
- ✓ connect and talk more with their parents,
- ✓ be less likely to have behavior problems,
- ✓ be less likely to use drugs, cigarettes, or alcohol when they get older.

A 2018 Community Health Assessment identified mental health, substance use, alcohol use, and obesity as top health priorities for Eau Claire County. Making time for family meals is one-way parents can help prevent these issues at home. Benefits may start to show up when your family eats **three or more meals together** per week. A family meal means at least one parent sits down to eat with kids at home.

### Want to enjoy more meals as a family, but short on time? Here are some steps to make family meals happen:

- **Set a goal.** If you already eat together one time per week, start by adding in one more weekly family meal.
- **Keep it simple, when you don't have time to cook.** The meal doesn't have to be fancy or homemade to be healthy and enjoyable. Build a small collection of meal ideas that take 30 minutes or less.
- **Ask for help.** Teach kids that taking time and effort to eat together is important. Children can help share ideas for meals. Little kids can practice counting forks and napkins to set the table. Older kids can pour drinks and prepare a salad. Teenagers can practice independence by taking a small grocery list and money to the store- let them pick out an extra vegetable or whole grain bread for family meals.
- **Make it fun. With young children, encourage tastes of the foods offered, but don't force them to eat.** Avoid snacks before and after meals and let children choose how much to eat. Let them be a part of the conversation by asking fun questions. With older kids, leave serious conversations for another time. Focus on making family meals a time everyone looks forward to.



September is Family Meals Month. For more nutrition information, visit [www.kidseatright.org](http://www.kidseatright.org).

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