



Facts: Eat Together, Eat Better with Real Dairy

Eating meals together is good for all family members. Recent studies link regular family dinners with lower rates of substance abuse, teen pregnancy and depression, as well as higher grade-point averages and self-esteem in children and young adults. (*Canadian Family Physician, 2015*)

According to a survey, only 30 percent of families in America report eating at least 3 meals together in a week, while 10 percent reported eating no meals together. (*ConAgra Brands Survey, 2003*)

According to The Hartman Group, a firm that focuses on food and beverages trends, more than half of Americans (53 percent) decide what they are going to eat for dinner within an hour of meal time.

Time is the biggest barrier to preparing healthier meals at home according to a study published in the American Journal of Preventive Medicine. The study found working adults spent the least amount of time on food preparation and more money on convenience.

The more time spent on home food preparation, the higher the nutritious quality, including significantly more vegetables, salads, fruits, and dairy. (*American Journal of Preventive Medicine, 2016*)

The Kansas Home Extension Service reports planning meals using a shopping list can cut costs on impulse purchases by 40 percent.

Mindful meal planning can also reduce food waste. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization, up to one-third of all food is squandered or thrown away before it is consumed by people.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends milk and water as the primary beverages for growing children. Milk is the top food source for calcium, vitamin D and potassium and it offers some of the highest quality protein available.

Unfortunately, one out of two children, ages nine and up are falling short on calcium, vitamin D and potassium, and 75 percent of kids younger than nine are falling short on vitamin D and potassium. These nutrients are critical for kids' growth. So much so that the current Dietary Guidelines for Americans identified them as nutrients of public health concern because many people, including children, are not consuming enough.

The Eat Together Campaign - celebrated every October - was created over 20 years ago. Its purpose is to remind families that time spent on preparing and eating meals together supports physical, social, and emotional health for children and teens.

Eating together with co-workers has the same social and nutritional benefits found in families. Co-workers who made time to eat lunch together reported better work performance, better nutrition and improved work relationships. (*The Journal of Human Performance, 2015*)