

To Your Health

Family Day - A Day to Eat Dinner with Your Children

Family Day - September 24 - might be one of the most important days you celebrate this year. It's a time to focus attention on the importance of eating and talking together at mealtime.

Child experts say that regular family meals are one of the best ways to help children and teens be fit, healthy, and ready to succeed.

Young people who spend more time eating and talking with their families are more likely to do well in school, more likely to have healthy weight, and more likely to get the nutrition they need. They are also less likely to use drugs, alcohol, and tobacco, and less likely to develop eating disorders.

Family meals are the perfect place to teach children the joy of healthy eating. Phyllis Dennee, nutrition education

specialist with Montana State University Extension says, "Mealtimes are ideal for nutrition show-and-tell. You can show kids how to eat slowly and enjoy their food, while also talking about how foods help your body grow strong and give you the energy to play hard." Dennee adds that planning and cooking meals together offers the same benefits as eating together. It's all about talking together and making food decisions.

Visit the **Family Day** website for more information:

www.casafamilyday.org

Source: *Eat Right Montana* - September newsletter

Checklist for a Clean Kitchen

Food safety is a year-round necessity. From top to bottom, a clean kitchen is a main line of defense between your family and the spread of colds, flu and foodborne illness. Before you prepare and enjoy foods in your kitchen, eliminate the breeding grounds for dangerous bacteria.

Everyone in the family should **wash their hands often** - front and back, between fingers, under fingernails - before and after every step in preparing or eating foods.

Clean all work surfaces often to remove food particles and spills. Use hot soapy water. Keep nonfood items - purses, book bags, shoes, pets, newspapers, etc. - off the counters and away from food and utensils. Wash the counter carefully before and after food preparation.

Wash dishes and cookware in the dishwasher or in hot, soapy water, and rinse well.

Source: American Dietetic Association

Shopping Smart

Grain foods - keep them "whole" Breads, snack crackers, ready-to-eat cereals, grains that you cook - use whole grains as often as possible. For example, if you are purchasing whole wheat bread, whole wheat flour should be listed as the first ingredient on the "ingredients" label.

Produce - fill your cart! Make the produce area the most important section of the store. Select a variety of colorful fruits and vegetables for meals and snacks. Try one "new" fruit or vegetable a week.

Dairy - keep it low in fat or fat free Choose low-fat or fat-free milk or milk products as often as possible.

Meat, seafood and deli - think lean

Beef: loin, round, lean or extra lean ground beef **Pork:** loin **Poultry:** white meat without skin **Seafood:** choose items that are not breaded.

Choose cuts with a little fat marbling and trim most visible fat prior to cooking. Use low-fat cooking methods: bake, broil, grill, microwave, steam, poach.

Canned foods - avoid added sugar Choose fruits packed in water or juice instead of syrup.

Source: *Communicating Food for Health*, 2007 sample issue

Fall into Fitness

Variety is as important in physical activity as it is in nutrition. Your muscles need different activities in order to be strong, flexible, and energetic.

Enjoy more everyday activities. Everyday activities offer fitness opportunities for the whole family. As the days get cooler, getting outside feels better and better. Walk the dog. Rake (and jump in) piles of leaves. Walk in a park and find colorful leaves, nuts, etc. Plan to enjoy as many outdoor physical activities every day as you can.

Enjoy more aerobic activities. Anything that involves continuous movement of your arms and legs - which gets your heart pumping a little faster - can be aerobic. Bike riding, jumping rope, and brisk walking can be fun and safe at any age. Aim for at least 10-20 minutes at a time, at least 30-60 minutes total per day, at least five days a week.

Enjoy more strength activities. American Heart Association guidelines stress the importance of sustaining muscle strength. Adults can get and stay strong with 5-10 pound weights or simple resistance bands. Aim for 8-10 strengthening exercises twice per week.

Enjoy more flexibility activities. While children are naturally flexible, adults need regular stretching to maintain flexibility. Pilates, yoga, and tai chi classes (or videos) are great. Simple, safe stretches can also be done at your desk, work station (or in front of the television) with *Stretching @ Your Desk* and *Yoga @ Your Desk* from

www.centre4activeliving.ca/workplace

Source: *Eat Right Montana* - September newsletter

For more information: www.extension.iastate.edu/food and www.extension.iastate.edu/foodsafety