

Food for Thought

If you are too busy for family mealtime, you are too busy! Keep that in mind when you read about the research on the benefits of family mealtime. Ask for Pm 1842 *Say 'Yes' to Family Meals* for helpful hints. And when you enjoy family mealtime, plan to include plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables this time of year!

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How sweet it is

Did you know that the average American eats 31 teaspoons of added sugar per day?! That's about 500 calories.



So where does the added sugar come from?

Here are some possibilities:

2 Tablespoons of ketchup	1 tsp sugar
2 Tbl fat-free French dressing	1 tsp sugar
½ cup spaghetti sauce in a jar	1-2 tsp sugar
2 Tablespoons barbecue sauce	2.5 tsp sugar
½ cup baked beans	3 tsp sugar
1 cup tomato soup	4 tsp sugar
6 oz. fat-free fruit yogurt	4 tsp sugar

Remember that the Nutrition Facts labels on food products list sugar in grams.
One gram= 4 calories. One teaspoon = 4 grams.

Eat your colors every day – think green!



Include asparagus, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, celery, collards, grapes, green beans, green peppers, honeydew melon, lettuce, peas and spinach.

The benefits of "eating green" include strong bones and teeth, healthy vision and a lower risk of some cancers.

Family meals - are they important?

Family meals are a time-honored ritual as part of our American culture. Sharing meals has been a symbol of family unity, love, connections and communication.

Frequency of family meals is linked with more positive dietary intakes and healthy behaviors among adolescents. Family meals can facilitate communication, family interaction and a sense of unity. These are just some of the benefits of eating meals with your family.

As families have undergone social changes in family structure, maternal employment and hectic schedules, we wonder if family meals are disappearing. Current research findings on family meals show:

- Family meals are still important. Surveys indicate that over 80% of parents view family dinners as important; and 79% of teens cited eating dinner at home as one of their top-rated family activities.
- Even though eating family meals together is valued, it can be difficult to achieve. Studies show about 1/3 of adolescents eat dinner with their family every day; but 22-32% of teens say they eat dinner with their family rarely or a few days each week.
- Major reasons cited by teens for not having family meals: parent and teen schedules, desire for autonomy, poor family relations, and food dislikes. Most adolescents said they would eat more healthful foods if they ate more often with their parents.
- Recent studies show dietary habits of adolescents improve with frequent family dinners together. This includes greater intake of fruits and vegetables, milk, and less fried food, soft drinks and saturated and trans fats.
- Studies also show a correlation between frequent family dinners and reduced risk that a teen will smoke, drink or use illegal drugs. For example, teens who have dinner with their families two nights a week or less are at twice the risk of substance abuse as teens who have frequent family dinners.

Source: Mary Story, PhD, RD and Professor, School of Public Health, Univ. of Minnesota.