


BENEFITS OF EATING TOGETHER

RESEARCH SHOWS WHEN CHILDREN SHARE MEALS WITH OTHERS, THERE ARE MANY BENEFITS:

GOOD FOR THE BRAIN

Young Children	School-Aged Children	Teenagers
EXPOSURE TO A WIDER VOCABULARY DURING MEALTIME CONVERSATIONS VERSUS BEING READ TO FROM STORYBOOKS.	A PREDICTOR OF HIGH ACHIEVEMENT SCORES VERSUS TIME SPENT ON ACADEMICS OR PLAYING SPORTS. 	TWICE AS LIKELY TO GET A'S IN SCHOOL IF 5-7 MEALS PER WEEK ARE EATEN WITH FAMILY VERSUS ONLY 2 MEALS PER WEEK.

GOOD FOR THE BODY

Young & School-Aged Children	Teenagers
MORE LIKELY TO EAT A MORE NUTRITIOUS DIET AND LESS LIKELY TO BE OVERWEIGHT LATER IN LIFE.	MORE LIKELY TO EAT HEALTHILY ONCE THEY LIVE ON THEIR OWN.

GOOD FOR THE MIND

Young & School-Aged Children	Teenagers
RESULTS IN HIGHER SELF-ESTEEM.	BETTER OUTLOOK ON THE FUTURE AND LESS DEPRESSION AND RISKY TEEN BEHAVIOR.

ADDED BONUS

ADULTS ALSO BENEFIT FROM EATING MEALS WITH OTHERS:

- A MORE NUTRITIOUS DIET
- INCREASED SELF-ESTEEM
- LOWER RISK OF DEPRESSION



PULL UP A SEAT

EATING MEALS WITH CHILDREN IS AN EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITY TO ENCOURAGE HEALTHY EATING. WHEN CHILDREN OBSERVE OTHERS EATING HEALTHY FOODS, THEY ARE MORE LIKELY TO EAT HEALTHY FOODS.



ENVIRONMENT MATTERS

THE EATING ENVIRONMENT SHOULD BE POSITIVE, FUN AND LIGHTHEARTED. SHARING A STORY OR A JOKE IS ONE WAY TO KEEP THE CONVERSATION POSITIVE AND ENRICHING FOR EVERYONE AT THE TABLE.

AVOID NEGATIVE FOOD TALK

CHILDREN ARE EASILY INFLUENCED BY WHAT THEY HEAR FROM ADULTS ABOUT FOOD AND DIETS. AVOID NEGATIVE STATEMENTS ABOUT FOOD, DIETS, BODY WEIGHT OR SIZE DURING MEAL/SNACK TIMES. IF TEENAGERS OR OTHER ADULTS AT MEAL/SNACK TIME, ASK THEM TO REFRAIN FROM THIS TYPE OF CONVERSATION.



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FIND FAMILIARITY WHEN TRYING NEW FOODS

EMBRACE NEW FOODS, TEXTURES AND FLAVORS BY COMBINING FAMILIAR FLAVORS CHILDREN ENJOY WITH A NEW FOOD THEY HAVE NEVER EATEN.

EXAMPLES:

NEW FOOD: PARSNIPS

FAMILIAR FLAVOR: RANCH DRESSING

TRY: ROASTED PARSNIPS WITH RANCH SEASONING



NEW FOOD: CHICKPEAS (GARBANZO BEANS)

FAMILIAR FLAVOR: CHOCOLATE

TRY: CHOCOLATE HUMMUS WITH GRAHAM CRACKERS



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PREPARE HEALTHY MEALS TOGETHER

IF CARING FOR CHILDREN OF VARYING AGE GROUPS, INVOLVING EVERYONE IN MEAL PREPARATION IS A GREAT WAY TO ENCOURAGE HEALTHY EATING.



EXAMPLE: VEGGIE PIZZA

TODDLER AGE: SPOON PIZZA SAUCE ONTO DOUGH (WITH HELP)

PRESCHOOL AGE: TOP PIZZA WITH CHEESE AND VEGGIES

6-12 YEARS OLD: MIX DOUGH INGREDIENTS IN A BOWL, SPREAD DOUGH ONTO FLAT SURFACE

12+ YEARS OLD: WASH AND CHOP VEGGIES

ADULTS: PLACE PIZZA PAN IN OVEN, REMOVE FROM OVEN AND CUT HOT PIZZA



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