

Celebrate Family Day, Every Day!

"We can't eat together because the children's sports practices interfere."

"Dad gets home very late, the kid's bedtime would be much too late."

"I am just too exhausted after a hard day to think about preparing a meal."



You've heard all the excuses; perhaps you've even used one or two. And you're not alone, only about one-third of U.S. families eat dinner together most nights. Of course it's not easy, anything worthwhile seldom is. Leisurely meals of the

past have become frantic pit stops and they should be so much more. Family meals are a chance to refuel both body and spirit and one of the best ways to stay connected as a family.

You may wish to reconsider the value of the family meal. Would it surprise you to learn that research by the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) at Columbia University found that children and teens who frequently eat dinner together as a family:

- Are at half the risk of substance abuse compared with those who dine infrequently with their families
- Are more likely to get good grades
- Have lower levels of stress and are more likely to be emotionally content

These are certainly compelling reasons to make family meals a priority.

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did you know...

- ▶ The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse has found that the more often kids eat dinner with their families, the less likely they are to smoke, drink or use drugs.
- ▶ September 1–7, 2015 is National Childhood Injury Prevention Week.
- ▶ Nearly every 10 days, a child dies from being left in a hot vehicle.
- ▶ National Child Passenger Safety Week is September 13–19, 2015.
- ▶ California law requires that all children under age 8 must be properly buckled into a car seat or booster in the back seat.
- ▶ Children under one year are required to ride in rear-facing car seats in the back seat, and it is recommended that they ride rear-facing until they are 2 years.

Sources: www.casafamilyday.org,
www.KidsAndCars.org

Quotable Quotes

“Sitting down to a meal together draws a line around us. It encloses us and strengthens the bonds that connect us with other members of our self-defined clan, shutting out the rest of the world.”

– Miriam Weinstein

INSIDE:

- ◆ Prevent Heat Stroke Tragedies
- ◆ Musical Beach Balls

- ◆ Recipes
- ◆ Food Funny

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Tips for Making Family Mealtimes Happen

Engage everyone in the conversation. Besides making your child feel valued, you expose them to new language and social skills around the table. Talk about what happened in everyone's day, school, work, extracurricular activities or current events. Save unpleasant topics and negative criticism for another time.

If only one parent can be present, it's okay. Sitting and eating together makes a family meal.

Laughter is the best dinnertime music, turn off the TV, and put phones on silent. Don't let these distractions ruin an important and enjoyable break in your day.

Be willing to keep meal times flexible so that family meals can happen even when schedules vary from day to day.

If someone must leave early or arrive late, provide some time for sharing by inviting them into the kitchen to help plan, prepare or clean up.

Nourishing food, great conversations ~ that's what family meals are made of. A family meal doesn't have to be fancy for families to enjoy each other's company. Old-fashioned comfort food, take and bake pizza, deli chicken with all the trimmings, soup and sandwich night, a BBQ or picnic in the back yard, all bring the family together.

This isn't about creating guilt and angst. Don't beat yourself up if you can't make family dinner a daily event. Start where you are and move forward. Even going from none to one or two family meals a week is an improvement. A weekend brunch or lunch can take the place of dinner if dinner isn't possible. Chances are that you will all enjoy eating together so much you'll be eager to make it happen as often as possible.

September 28, 2015 is Family Day, a day to eat with your children. What began as a grass roots movement has since grown into a national celebration. This day reminds us to take a "time out" to consider all the benefits of joining around the dinner table. Launched in 2001 by the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) at Columbia University, Family Day serves as a reminder that



family meals are a simple and effective way to help prevent negative peer pressure.

7 Secrets to Successful Family Dinners

1. Start the pattern of family dinners when children are young.
2. Encourage children to create menu ideas and participate in meal preparation.
3. Sit down together and minimize distractions.
4. Establish a routine to start and end each meal; wash hands, light candles/blow out candles, set the table/clear the table, say a prayer or tell a story.
5. Take time to enjoy your meal without rushing.
6. Keep conversations positive and make sure everyone gets a chance to speak.
7. After dinner play a board game or serve dessert to encourage the family to continue to spend time together.

Family dinners are about more than simply sharing a meal; they're about sharing our lives. For more information about family day log onto www.casafamilyday.org

— Donna Green R.D.
Contra Costa Child Care Council

KIDS' HEALTH & SAFETY

Prevent Heat Stroke Tragedies

KidsAndCars.org believes the solution to preventable heat stroke tragedies is a combination of education and technology. KidsAndCars.org would like all vehicles to come equipped with a system that would alert a driver if a child has been left in a vehicle. Below are some simple tips parents and caregivers can follow to prevent heat stroke tragedies.



- Never leave children alone in or around cars; not even for a minute.
- **“Look Before You Lock”** - Get in the habit of always opening the back door to check the back seat before leaving your vehicle. Make sure no child has been left behind.
- Create a reminder to check the back seat.
 - Put something you’ll need, like your cell phone, handbag, employee ID, briefcase, etc in the back seat so that you have to open the back door to retrieve that item every time you park.
 - Keep a large stuffed animal in the child’s car seat. When the child is placed in the car seat, put the stuffed animal in the front passenger seat. It is a visual reminder that the child is in the back seat.
- Make sure you have a strict policy in place with your childcare provider about childcare drop-off. Everyone involved in the care of your child should always be aware of their whereabouts. If your child will not be attending childcare as scheduled, it is the parent’s responsibility to call and inform the childcare provider. If your child does not show up as scheduled; and they have not received a call from the parent, ask the childcare provider to contact you immediately to ensure the safety of your child. (This is similar to the ‘absence-line’ used by most elementary,

middle and high schools.)

- Keep vehicles locked at all times, even in driveways or garages. Ask home visitors, child care providers and neighbors to do the same.
- Keep car keys and remote openers out of the reach of children.
- If a child goes missing, immediately check the inside passenger compartments and trunks of all vehicles in the area very carefully, even if they are locked. A child may lock the car doors after entering a vehicle on their own, but may not be able to unlock them.
- If you see a child alone in a vehicle, get involved. Call 911 immediately. If the child seems hot or sick, get them out of the vehicle as quickly as possible.
- Be especially careful during busy times, schedule changes and periods of crisis or holidays. This is when many tragedies occur.
- Use drive-thru services when available (restaurants, banks, pharmacies, dry cleaners, etc.) and pay for gas at the pump.

Please share these important safety tips with your childcare providers, teachers, relatives, friends, family and neighbors.... It could save a life!

For more information visit www.KidsAndCars.org or contact us at email@KidsAndCars.org.



Back-To-School Oatmeal Recipes

Oatmeal with Banana and Molasses

Oats, quick, old fashioned or steel cut	½ cup
Banana slices	½ cup
Toasted pecans or walnuts, chopped	2 Tbsp
Milk	2 Tbsp
Molasses	1 Tbsp

1. Prepare the oats according to the package directions.
2. Top with the banana and nuts. Drizzle with milk and molasses.

Oatmeal with Peanut Butter and Grapes

Oats, quick, old fashioned or steel cut	½ cup
Creamy natural peanut butter	2 Tbsp
Milk	2 Tbsp
Red grapes, sliced	½ cup

1. Prepare the oats according to the package directions.
2. Stir in the peanut butter. Drizzle with milk. Top with the grapes.

Yield: 1 serving

Meets requirement for grains/breads and fruit/vegetable

— www.realsimple.com

Roasted Vegetable Mac & Cheese with Ham

Broccoli, florets	½ head	Flour	¼ cup
Cauliflower, florets	½ head	Milk	2 cups
Cherry tomatoes	1 pint	Cheddar cheese, shredded	4 ounces
Olive oil	3 Tbsp	Ham, chopped	6 ounces
Salt and pepper	¼ tsp (each)	Pepper jack cheese, sliced	2 ounces
Pasta shells	6 ounces		

1. Preheat oven to 425°F. Toss vegetables with 1 Tbsp of the oil, salt and pepper on a rimmed baking sheet. Roast vegetables, tossing once, until tender, 14–16 minutes.
2. Cook the pasta according to package directions, and drain. Heat remaining 2 Tbsp of oil and add flour, cook, whisking for a minute. Slowly whisk in the milk. Cook, stirring occasionally until thickened, 5–7 minutes.
3. Remove sauce from heat and add cheddar cheese, ham, pasta and vegetables. Transfer mixture to 2 quart baking dish. Top with pepper jack cheese and broil until golden brown, 2–3 minutes.

Yield: 6 servings

Meets requirement for fruit/vegetable, grains/breads and protein/meat alternate

— *adapted from: realsimple.com*

Food Funny Q: Why did the banana go out with the fig?
A: Because he couldn't find a date!

Activity Corner

MUSICAL BEACH BALLS

Beach balls and other large, light-weight balls can help children practice throwing, catching, collecting, kicking and striking. These skills help children move in new ways and improve coordination.



Have the children march around holding a beach ball as music plays. When the music stops have the children sit on their ball. Once the music starts again call out a different locomotor skill such as walk, run, skip, gallop or slide to the music. Change the tempo of the music to travel at different speeds. Each time the music stops have the children sit on the ball until the music starts up again.

— www.headstartbodystart.org

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