

Eating Together Can Help with School Success

It sounds easy enough ... sit down with your children to enjoy a good meal together. But we all know that busy schedules can make this simple goal a challenge.

Eating together and having a conversation with a close adult at least four times a week has been shown to have positive effects on children's health and social development.

Why does it matter?

Research shows that eating together regularly is an effective strategy for improving school performance and preventing high risk behaviours in youth.

The good news is you don't have to be perfect.

- ▶ Eating together and having a conversation with a close adult at least four times a week has been shown to have positive effects on children's health and social development.

What can you do to make this happen?

- ▶ If dinner together doesn't work out, try breakfast instead.
- ▶ If you don't have time to prepare a fancy meal, don't worry. It doesn't matter what you eat. Being together is what counts.
- ▶ When you have more time to cook, involve everyone. Cooking together teaches children and youth lifelong skills – and it shares the workload.
- ▶ Turn off TV and computer screens when you are at the table. Talking to each other is the critical part of the family meal.
- ▶ Avoid distractions by turning off phones and other devices.
- ▶ Focus on making your meal together stress-free. Leave difficult topics for another time.

- ▶ Use mealtimes to learn about what's important to your children.
- ▶ Ask your children to describe their day. Listening to what they say will tell you a lot about how they are experiencing school.
- ▶ Use your time eating together as an opportunity to encourage your children and tell them you are proud of their efforts and achievements. This simple practice will help your children succeed in school.

References

Adapted from *Family Meals Improve Connection and Confidence*. Heart-Mind Online.

<https://heartmindonline.org/resources/family-meals-improve-connection-and-confidence>