

## Family Table “News Article”



How many times did your family sit down for a meal this past week? Research shows that a number of families rarely have a meal together. This is important because teens that don't eat with their families tend to eat less healthy foods. They may have more problems in school and with drugs. A study from the University of Minnesota asked 4,700 teens about their eating habits. One-third of them ate seven or more meals with their family in the past week, but the same percent had only two meals or less with family. 14 percent of the teens shared no family meals at all during the week.

The scientists found that teens who ate with their families more often had better diets than teens who ate with their families less often. Teens who shared many meals with their families ate more fruits and vegetables, grains and protein. They also drank fewer soft drinks. These teens had fewer problems with school, drugs and alcohol and reported fewer extreme weight control practices. The scientists asked teens why family meals can make a difference. They said meals together give parents a chance to “model” or show healthy eating habits. Families also have a chance to talk about everyone's day, so teens feel more connected and cared about.

The importance of family meals is becoming clear, but another study shows that the number of young people who eat with their families

every night is going down. Half of the students surveyed said family schedules were too busy for regular family meals. After-school activities and long parent work hours make family meals hard to schedule. The ease of eating on the run works against family meal time. Yet, 74 percent of the teens in this study said they enjoyed family meals, and eat healthier when they eat with their families. The scientists suggest that families make meals together a priority. Some ideas to try are planning special meals or always plan a weekend dinner. If dinners are too hard to plan, the family might meet for breakfast. Birthdays and family



events are key times when families can enjoy meals together. There's even a national “Families Eat Together” week to promote family meals. The pay-off is young people who eat better and feel better about themselves and their families.

- How often do you have a sit-down meal with your family?
- What are some topics that you might talk about at a family meal?
- What can you do to help your family plan meals together?
- What can you do to help others in your town plan more family meals?

### Article Sources:

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