

10 Ways to Get Everyone Excited About Family Dinners



Navigating various schedules, activities, [homework](#) requirements, and food preferences can make having a regular family dinner difficult, if not downright impossible some weeks. In fact, research has found that the frequency of family dinners is on the [decline](#). But multiple studies show that it's worth making the effort to sit down at the table together.



A [systemic review](#) of 14 studies on this topic found that adolescents who have frequent family meals are inversely associated with disordered eating, concern about body image, smoking and drinking, and violence. In addition, they found that those teens were associated with having greater self-esteem, making better food choices, and better grades.

Another [recent longitudinal study](#) looked at the quality of the family meal environment of nearly 1,500 children at age 6, and then followed up about the children's well-being at age 10. They found that 6-year-olds with good family meal environment quality were more likely to have good physical fitness at age 10, and had lower levels of [soda](#) consumption, physical aggression, and nonaggressive delinquency.

So with everyone so busy, how do you ensure that family dinners are something everyone prioritizes and *wants* to be a part of? Try these suggestions from real moms to get everyone excited about gathering around the dinner table together:

Get your kids involved. Julie Burlison, the CEO of [Young Chefs Academy](#), a kids' cooking school, recommends letting your children help put together the meal in the kitchen. Depending on the age of your child, they may be able to do anything from being your sous chef, stirring and slicing and dicing, to gathering ingredients and tools, to just watching the action from a step stool. "Our 6-year-old likes to count out the plates, napkins, cups, and silverware by herself [and] set the table. Our older boys like to make the salad dressing and toss the salad," says [La Dorita's](#) Josephine Caminos Oria, of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. When your kids feel like they're part of the process, the family meal may become more exciting to them.