

FitFUTURE

Strategies for
Better Living.



Family Meals

by Susan Figaro Grace, MEd, RD, CWC

When you offer structure for meals and snacks, your child will come to the table hungry and ready to eat. Ellyn Satter, Registered Dietitian and Family Therapist, has written many books on positive feeding and parenting practices. One of her key principles in feeding is the division of responsibility:

Parents are responsible for the **what, when and where**. Children are responsible for **whether they eat and how much**.

As a parent, grandparent or adult caregiver, you can help raise healthy eaters during these critical years by doing your best to:

- Serve regular, balanced meals and snacks with a variety of nutrient-rich foods.
- Provide calm, pleasant meal times where adults and children can talk together.
- Allow children to use their internal signals to decide how much and what to eat.
- Explore a variety of flavors and foods from different cultures and cuisines.
- Share an appreciation for healthful food, lovingly prepared and shared with others.
- Make food safety, including washing hands, a part of every eating occasion.
- Teach basic skills for making positive food choices away from home.
- Find credible food and nutrition resources when you don't know the answer.

Sometimes a very simple act can have important, long-lasting benefits. Family meals provide an opportunity to eat and talk together, which helps:



- Foster** family unity.
- Prevent** behavior problems at home and school.
- Enhance** academic success.
- Improve** nutrition.
- Promote** healthy weight for kids.

While this may seem like an intimidating list, family habits go a long way in making this happen: regular family meals and involving kids in nutrition from the ground up.



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Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics
<http://www.eatright.org>

