

## Session Three - Eating Together

### Core Message

Eat together. Talk together. Make mealtime a family time.

### Background Information

Families that eat dinner together tend to have healthier diets that are higher in fruits, vegetables, and calcium and lower in saturated fat.<sup>1-4</sup> Eating meals together also provides opportunities for role modeling. However, how you eat together makes a difference. Some research indicates that watching television while eating together may reduce the positive effects of family meals.<sup>5-6</sup> Family meals may have a greater positive effect on children's diets when the meal is prepared at home.<sup>5</sup> In addition, involving preschoolers in food preparation may also help make new foods more familiar and can help motivate children to try new foods.

### Sources for Additional Information\*

1. Gillman MW, Rifas-Shiman SL, Frazier AL, Rockett HR, Camargo CA Jr, Field AE, Berkey CS, Colditz GA. Family dinner and diet quality among older children and adolescents. *Arch Fam Med*. 2000;9:235-240.
2. Neumark-Sztainer D, Hannan PJ, Story M, Croll J, Perry C. Family meal patterns: associations with sociodemographic characteristics and improved dietary intake among adolescents. *J Am Diet Assoc*. 2003;103:317-322.
3. Coon KA, Goldberg J, Rogers BL, Tucker KL. Relationships between use of television during meals and children's food consumption patterns. *Pediatrics*. 2001;107:E7.
4. Larson NI, Neumark-Sztainer D, Hannan PJ, Story M. Family meals during adolescence are associated with higher diet quality and healthful meal patterns during young adulthood. *J Am Diet Assoc*. 2007;107:1502-1510.
5. Rockett HR. Family dinner: more than just a meal. *J Am Diet Assoc*. 2007;107: 1498-1501.
6. Feldman S, Eisenberg ME, Neumark-Sztainer D, Story M. Associations between watching TV during family meals and dietary intake among adolescents. *J Nutr Educ Behav*. 2007;39:257-263.

This information is adapted from the USDA website, <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fns/corenutritionmessages/default.html>

### Session Overview

During this session participants will explore the importance of eating meals as a family. They will put a plan in place for eating more family meals in the coming week.

### Dialogue Learning Tips

- Use open questions.
- Time management is important in maintaining

\*These are not to be distributed to participants.

learner participation and energy. After asking an open question, let participants know that you will give them a few minutes for discussion. Let them know when the discussion time is almost up, and then end the discussion at the time you had planned.

- After asking a question:
  - Wait five seconds before listening to responses. This will allow all participants time to gather their thoughts and respond.
  - Allow participants to volunteer answers. Do not call on participants.
  - Affirm participants' answers. Use their names, thank them for contributing, and tell them why you are thanking them. For example, "**Thank you for sharing Martha. I imagine most of us can relate to what you said.**"
  - Avoid praising participants' responses, (e.g., avoid saying "good" or "excellent").
- Ask follow-up questions to show you are listening to participants' responses.

**Time Required for Lesson:** 45 minutes

## PREPARATION

### Bring with you:

- Name tags (one for each participant)
- Colorful markers or pens (to write on the name tags)
- The session poster
- Copies of the participant handout
- The educator handout
- Sign-in sheets
- A watch or clock so that you can effectively manage time

### Before the participants arrive:

- Display the poster for this session in the room.
- Arrange the tables and chairs so that all participants will be able to see you and each other. Make sure there is nothing (such as a desk) between you and the participants. If there is a round table in the room that will fit everyone, plan to use that table.
- Put name tags, markers, and the sign-in sheets in the middle of the table or at the front of the room.
- Put one copy of the participant handout at each participant's seat.
- Make a name tag for yourself, and put it on your shirt where participants will be able to see it.

## WELCOME and OVERVIEW (5 minutes)

Start by greeting participants as they walk in the door. Greet them with a smile, and say hello; use their names if you remember them. Ask them to make a name tag and take a seat.

Once everyone has arrived, welcome them to the class.

Remind them that last time you talked about how important it is for them to involve their children in cooking and how to do this safely.

Tell them that today you are going to talk about the importance of eating with young children. Point to the poster and read it aloud.

## LESSON (30 minutes)

### **Anchor** (5 minutes)

Ask participants to talk with the person sitting next to them about a recent family meal that was especially enjoyable. Ask them to answer these questions:

- What was served?
- Who was there?
- What did they talk about?
- How did it feel to eat as a family?

Give participants three minutes to talk about their family meals.

Bring the group back together and listen to and affirm three or four participants' answers. You do not need to hear from everyone.

### **Add** (15 minutes)

Read through the front of the handout with participants. Use the Discussion Questions on the educator handout to encourage participants to talk about family meals and the importance of eating with their children.

### **Apply and Away** (10 minutes)

Ask participants to use the "Goal Setting" section on the back of the handout to write down three meals that they will share with their family during the next week. Have them include when they will eat the meal and who will be present.

Allow participants to write for two minutes.

Bring the group back together and ask, "**Who would like to share what they have written down?**"

Listen to and affirm a few, but not necessarily all, of the participants' plans.

## CLOSER (5 minutes)

Refer back to the poster and remind participants that it is important to eat family meals with their children.

Remind participants that when they are eating family meals they should:

- **Turn off the TV,**
- **Talk with their children about their day,**
- **Make sure everyone washes their hands before they start eating,**
- **Avoid rushing to the next activity, and**
- **Enjoy the meal and being together!**

Thank the participants for coming and tell them when and where the next session will be held. As participants leave, say goodbye to them by name. Wait to leave until all of the participants have left.

## FOLLOW-UP (after the session)

### Text or Email Messages

Text or email messages can be sent to your participants to reinforce the main points of this session and remind them about the next session. The table below outlines approximately when your participants will receive the messages based on the frequency of your classes.

If you have this much time between sessions	Reinforcement message 1 will be sent:	Reinforcement message 2 will be sent:	Reinforcement message 3 will be sent:	Reinforcement message 4 will be sent:	Reminder messages will be sent:
One Week	Two days after the session	N/A	N/A	N/A	Five days after the session (two days before the next session)
Two Weeks	Two days after the session	Nine days after the session	N/A	N/A	Twelve days after the session (two days before the next session)
Three Weeks	Two days after the session	Nine days after the session	Seventeen days after the session	N/A	Nineteen days after the session (two days before the next session)
Four Weeks	Two days after the session	Nine days after the session	Seventeen days after the session	Twenty four days after the session	Twenty six days after the session (two days before the next session)

### Sample Reinforcement Messages For Session 3

\* Hi [first name]! When is your next family meal? Why not plan one for tonight? Feeding 4 Healthy Eating (Reply "STOP" to quit receiving texts)

\* Hi! No time for family dinners? Try a family breakfast or lunch, or even a snack! Feeding 4 Healthy Eating (Reply "STOP" to quit receiving texts)

\* Hi [first name]! When eating with your kids tonight, turn off the TV so you can focus on each other! Feeding 4 Healthy Eating

\* Hi! Have you tried the Quick Minestrone Soup? Your children can help make it for a family meal! Feeding 4 Healthy Eating (Reply "STOP" to quit receiving texts)

\* Hi! Family meals are a good time to catch up with your kids. You can ask them about their day! Feeding 4 Healthy Eating (Reply "STOP" to quit receiving texts)

### Reminder Message

\* Hi! Looking forward to seeing you at the next session: [DATE, TIME, and LOCATION]. Feeding 4 Healthy Eating (Reply "STOP" to quit receiving texts)

## Session Three: Eating Together Sign-In Sheet

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

As part of the **Feeding for Healthy Eating** program you can receive messages about feeding your young child.

We will send you 1–2 messages a week. These messages will give you reminders about what we talked about in class and suggestions for how to do the things that we talked about in class. We will also remind you when the next class will be held.

You can sign up for text messages or email messages. To sign up for the text messages, **write your cell phone number below**. Only sign up for the text messages if you have an unlimited text message plan. You will be charged your standard rate for these messages.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Cell phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

To sign up for the email messages, **write your email address below**.

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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To sign up for the email messages, **write your email address below**.

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_



# Eating Together

**Eat together. Talk together. Make mealtime a family time.**

## **Eating with your children can be fun and gives you a chance to role model healthy eating behaviors.**

- Start eating meals together as a family when your kids are young. This way, it becomes a habit.
- Decide when you will eat together as a family. Write it on your calendar. Plan other events around family meals.
- Try to have family meals at least four times a week.
- It does not have to be dinner. If it is easier for your family, have breakfast or lunch together.
- Gently encourage your child to try new foods.
- Turn off the television. Take phone calls later.
- Talk about fun and happy things. Try to make meals a stress-free time.
- Cook dinner fast on busy nights. Try stir-fried meat and vegetables, quick soups, or sandwiches.
- Do some tasks the day before. Wash and cut vegetables or make a fruit salad. Cook lean ground beef or turkey for burritos or chili. Store everything in the fridge until ready to use.
- Create family routines at meals that everyone enjoys.

This information is adapted from the USDA website, <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fns/corenutritionmessages/default.html>

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## Family Meal Tips

- Turn off the TV.
- Talk with your children about their day.
- Make sure everyone washes their hands before you start eating.
- When possible, avoid rushing to the next activity.
- Enjoy the meal and being together!
- Have everyone answer the same questions each night at dinner. Some fun questions:
  - What was the highlight of your day?
  - What did you learn today?
  - What are you looking forward to doing tomorrow?

### Quick Minestrone Soup

Try this soup for your next family meal!

#### Ingredients

- 1/2 cup whole-wheat pasta, uncooked
- 1 16-oz. package frozen mixed vegetables
- 2 cups low-sodium vegetable broth
- 1 15 1/2 oz. can kidney beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 16-oz. can low-sodium tomatoes
- 2 Tablespoons parsley, chopped
- 1 teaspoon Italian seasoning
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper

#### Directions

1. Cook pasta in boiling water for 10 minutes.
2. Drain.
3. At the same time, cook vegetables in broth for 15 minutes or until tender.
4. Add beans, tomatoes, seasonings, and pasta.
5. Cook until hot.

Serves: 8

#### Nutritional Information per Serving:

Calories: 120  
Total Fat: 0g  
Saturated Fat: 0g

**Be creative!** Try different beans and vegetables. Ask your children which beans and vegetables they want to add to the soup.

## Goal Setting

**What are three meals that you will share with your family during the next week?  
When will you eat the meals? Who will be present?**



# Eating Together

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### ANCHOR Activity

Ask participants to talk with the person sitting next to them about a recent family meal that was especially enjoyable.

Ask them to answer these questions:

- What was served?
- Who was there?
- What did you talk about?
- How did it feel to eat as a family?

**Discussion Questions:** Which is the best meal for your family to eat together? (on a weekday? on a weekend? breakfast, lunch or dinner?) Why? Remind participants that they do not have to eat dinner together.



2

**Discussion Questions:** Did your family eat meals together when you were a child? What are some happy memories that you have from those meals?



3

**Discussion Question:** Family meals are a good time to talk with your children. What are some topics that your children seem to enjoy talking about during meals?



**Eat together. Talk together.  
Make mealtime a family time.**

1

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- Turn off the television. Take phone calls later.
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- Talk about fun and happy things. Try to make meals a stress-free time.
- Try to have family meals at least four times a week.
- Cook dinner fast on busy nights. Try stir-fried meat and vegetables, quick soups, or sandwiches.
- It does not have to be dinner. If it is easier for your family, have breakfast or lunch together.
- Do some tasks the day before. Wash and cut vegetables or make a fruit salad. Cook lean ground beef or turkey for burritos or chili. Store everything in the fridge until ready to use.
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### APPLY and AWAY Activities

Ask participants to use the "Goal Setting" section on the back of the handout to write down three meals that they will share with their family during the next week. Have them include when they will eat the meal and who will be present.

Remind participants that when they are eating family meals they should :

- Turn off the TV
- Talk with their children about their day
- Make sure everyone washes their hands before they start eating.
- Avoid rushing to the next activity. Enjoy the meal and being together!

**TAKE AWAY Message:** It is important to eat family meals.

### Talking Points:

For parents who say they are not able to eat with their children:

- Encourage them to have at least one meal together as a family each week, suggest a weekend day if weekdays are too busy. Suggest that they put it on the calendar as a standing date and then plan everything else around that meal.
- If it is not possible to have all members of the family eat at once, suggest that as many as possible eat together and that at least one adult eats with the children.
- If they cannot eat at the same time as their children, suggest that they sit down with their children while their children are eating, so they can talk with their children.

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**Talk  
together.**

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