

# Getting started with Family Meals

## Research shows that children who eat with their family:

- Do better in school and on achievement tests<sup>1</sup>
- Are less likely to become depressed<sup>2</sup> or develop eating disorders<sup>3</sup>
- Are less likely to abuse drugs and alcohol or smoke cigarettes<sup>4</sup>
- Eat less fried foods and drink less soft drinks<sup>5</sup>
- Eat more fruits, vegetables, lean meats, and milk<sup>5</sup>



## We don't have time for family meals!

1. Keep it simple.
2. Create family meals around take out food or going out to eat.
3. Create “no-cook” meals like canned vegetable soup and sandwiches or frozen pizza and a bag of salad mix.
4. If you cook, make simple recipes that you already know well. Cooking new recipes usually takes more time than your trusted and tried favorites.
5. Because of busy schedules, not every member in the family may be available for every family meal. Just gather who is available in the house and eat together.

## What is the first step?

The first step in starting the habit of eating together as family is to start with what you eat now and eat it together at regular and routine times. Try not to get caught up in what you “should” be eating. Just enjoy eating food together as a family!

**Families that eat together create life-long memories!**

<sup>1</sup> Council of Economic Advisers to the President, 2000

<sup>2</sup> Eisenberg, Olson, Neumark-Sztainer, Story, and Bearinger, 2004

<sup>3</sup> Ackard and Neumark-Sztainer, 2001

<sup>4</sup> NCASA, *The Importance of Family Dinners*, 2005

<sup>5</sup> Gillman, Rifas-Shiman, Frazier, Rockette, Camargo, Field, Berkey, and Colditz, 2000