



GATHER TOGETHER

The Family Dinner Project, a non-profit based at Massachusetts General Hospital, has studied the many benefits that eating with others can have on both physical and mental health. Eating a shared meal has even been shown to enhance team performance in firefighters when they prepare and enjoy a meal together. Across the life span, from toddlers to elderly adults having a shared meal is associated with healthier eating and better mood. In a study published in the Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior, family or shared meals were proven to be associated with healthier dietary outcomes which in turn benefits overall health and reduces the risk of certain chronic diseases. Enjoying meals together does not have to be complicated. Try some of the below suggestions to enhance meal times.

OFFER A VARIETY OF OPTIONS.

Consider different tastes and preferences, such as meat, vegetarian, or vegan dishes.

ALLOW COOKING TO BE PART OF THE COMMUNAL EATING EXPERIENCE.

Work as a team with family and friends to enjoy a meal from start to finish.

REMOVE DISTRACTIONS.

Set aside any distractions like smart phones or watches to fully enjoy conversations.

INVOLVE KIDS IN MEAL PREP.

Children can learn cooking skills, try new foods, and improve their diet when they help plan and prepare meals.

MAKE PLANS TO EAT WITH OTHERS.

Even if you start with just one meal a week, it is worth it to block out some time in your schedule.

A SHARED MEAL DOES NOT HAVE TO BE AT DINNER TIME.

Share brunch, breakfast, lunch or even a quick cup of coffee with others.