

## ***Dallin H. Oaks: “What your children really want for dinner is you”!!***

“The number of those who report that their “whole family usually eats dinner together” has declined 33 percent. This is most concerning because the time a family spends together “eating meals at home is the strongest predictor of children’s academic achievement and psychological adjustment.” Family mealtimes have also been shown to be a strong bulwark against children’s smoking, drinking, or using drugs. There is inspired wisdom in this advice to parents: what your children really want for dinner is you. My wife has always emphasized this and it blesses our family. (Elder Dallin H. Oaks, Conference Talk, October 2007)

### **HAVING FAMILY DINNER ALLOWS YOU TO:**

1. Build relationships
2. Monitor behavior
3. Sit face to face with your children

**CONTENT OF CONVERSATION AT DINNER IS VERY IMPORTANT!! HAVE IT RICH WITH CONTENT, STORYTELLING, EXPLANATION & GIVING DEFINITIONS.**

*EATING AS A FAMILY IS A HEALTH BENEFIT and has*

*POWERFUL EFFECTS ON the MENTAL & PHYSICAL HEALTH OF OUR CHILDREN*

#### **1. Better Nutrition**

Numerous studies have overwhelmingly pointed to the fact that families who eat together have better overall nutrition. In turn, this means they also have a lower risk of many diseases and of being overweight or obese.

One such study, conducted by Harvard researchers and published in the Archives of Family Medicine, found that families who reported eating together "every day" or "almost every day" took in more healthy nutrients, such as:

- Calcium
- Fiber
- Iron
- Vitamins B6 and B12
- Vitamins C and E

... than families who said they "never" or "only sometimes" ate meals together.

Another study by the University of Minnesota found that children whose families ate meals together often consumed more fruits and vegetables and fewer snack foods than those who did not.

#### **2. Kids do Better in School, Less Likely to Take Drugs**

Not only have studies found that kids who eat with their families get better grades in school and have a more positive attitude about their future, but they also are less likely to get involved with negative behaviors like drinking alcohol, taking drugs or smoking. The Columbia University study found that teens who only eat dinner with their families twice a week or less are:

- 3 times as likely to try marijuana
- 2.5 times more likely to smoke cigarettes
- 1.5 times as likely to try alcohol
- ... compared to teens who eat five or more family dinners a week.

### 3. Automatic "Check-In" Time

Perhaps the noticed benefits that kids display from eating family dinners comes from the fact that it gives parents a set time every night to "check-in" with their kids.

"People are really starting to understand that this is an important thing," said Richard D. Mulieri, a spokesman for the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse. "Families that do have dinner together often are families whose parents are fully engaged with their kids ..."

People who do eat dinner together regularly often say that being able to talk and find out about each other's days is the best part. Sitting down together at the dinner table -- sans TV, phones calls or other distractions -- is the perfect opportunity to discuss what's going on in your lives.

### 4. Help Your Kids Develop Language Skills

When it comes to family events, family dinners were the most important one in contributing to children's language development, according to a Harvard University study.

"When there is more than one adult at the table, it tends to make talk richer, topics are established by adult interest and can be extremely valuable opportunities for children to learn," said Dr. Catherine Snow, professor of education at Harvard and the lead researcher of the study.

### 5. Spend Time Together as a Family

Looking back on their childhoods, many parents will recall their nightly dinner hour, when everyone was expected to sit down at the table. Many will also recall these times as some of their most cherished memories. Establishing this routine with your own family will give you time to bond as a family now, and memories to fondly look back on later.

#### What About the Risks?

Believe it or not, there are some risks to eating together as a family. In order to be successful, family dinners must be enjoyable -- for you, for your spouse, for your kids. If everyone is tense, irritable or unhappy, there won't be a lot of conversation, bonding or other benefits.

So, in order to ensure that family dinners are beneficial, be careful of what you speak of.

"It's not the time to talk about cleaning their room or curfews," says Susan Moores, a registered dietitian. "Instead focus on open-ended questions about things your kids are interested in or things that will get them talking."

Also, stay away from the "clean your plate" mentality. Allow kids to serve themselves and just take a little bit. Forcing a child to eat everything on his plate will teach him to ignore his body's cues that he's full.

Finally, remember that it's OK (and probably necessary) to keep things simple. Have grilled or baked chicken with a salad, or throw meat and veggies in a crock-pot in the morning for a warm meal after work. You can also try meals that your kids can help prepare, like turkey burgers or individual pizzas they top themselves. Remember also that you can still sit down for a family meal even on those nights when you do order pizza or other take-out food.

The bottom line is, do what works for you -- whether that's cooking extra meals on the weekend to serve during the week, preparing meals in the morning or eating simpler meals, like sandwiches and soup, sometimes -- so that you're able to sit down and enjoy the meal too. (*The 5 Benefits – and a Few Risks – of Eating Together at the Dinner Table* by [www.SixWise.com](http://www.SixWise.com))



Kids who eat dinner with their families regularly are less depressed, less likely to take drugs and alcohol and get better grades in school.

## MAKING THE MOST OF THOSE MEALS – IT'S NOT THE DINNER ITSELF - 3 FACTORS TO CONSIDER

1. How the meal is accomplished – roles assigned
2. Genuine concern for each others daily activities
3. Content of conversation