

Nutrition Facts

Making Time for Family Meals

Busy lives can make finding time to enjoy meals together as a family a challenge. As children and teens get older, the number of family meals often decrease¹. However, making the effort to enjoy meals together as a family is worth it!



Family meals may help children and teens¹:

- Eat more vegetables and fruit and have less pop and fried foods.
- Perform better in school.
- Avoid high-risk activities, like substance abuse and smoking.
- Build and maintain close family relationships through conversations and sharing during the meal.
- Establish healthy eating routines.
- Learn to cook by helping to prepare meals.
- Listen to and follow their feelings of hunger and fullness.
- Practice social skills and manners.

Tips for Success

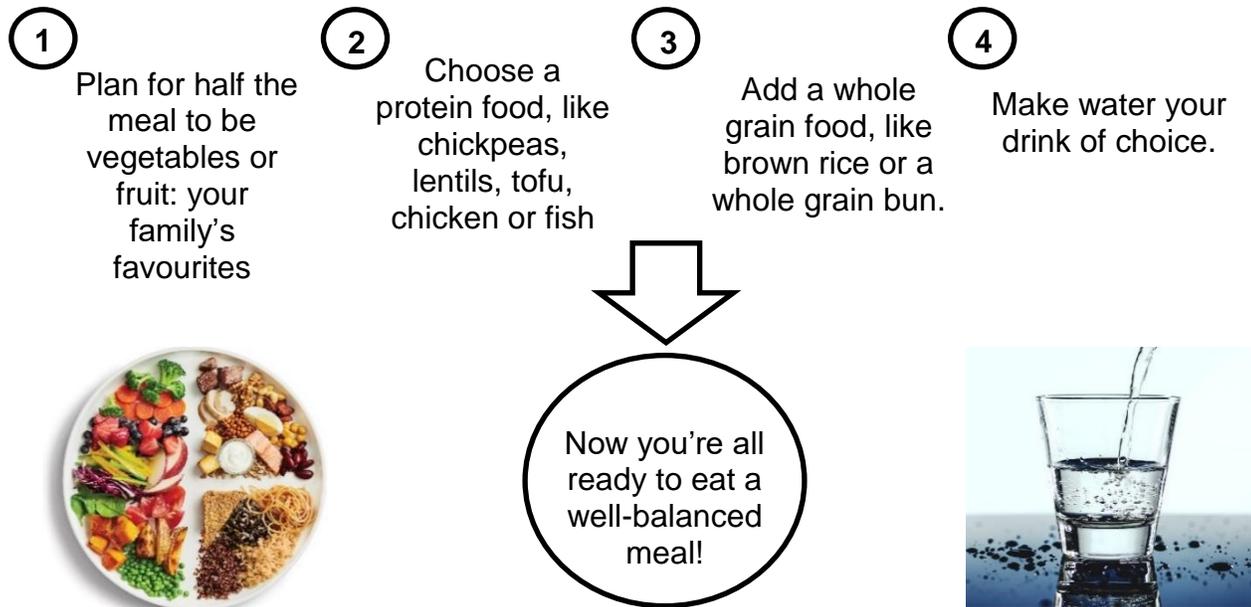
- Make family meals a priority. Even if you only have one more family meal per week, this is a step in the right direction!
- Be flexible with meal timing and location. Try a family picnic in the park before a sports game.
- Plan ahead. Use the tips below for meal planning and involving the whole family.
- Be a good role model. Try new foods with your kids but don't pressure them to try. Let it be their idea.
- Let your children serve themselves. This teaches them about portion sizes and helps them to feel confident.
- Remove distractions, like the TV, tablets and cell phones.
- Keep family conversations about pleasant topics. Don't use family meals to discuss chores or other family issues.
- Avoid the "clean your plate" thinking. Teach children and teens to eat until they feel full.

¹ Story, M., Neumark-Sztainer, D. A perspective on family meals: Do they matter? *Nutrition Today*. (2005)

² UnlockFood.ca. (2018). *Cooking with Kids of Different Ages*. Retrieved from: www.unlockfood.ca

Menu Planning

- Make time to plan your meals.
- Eat regular meals and snacks.
- Involve the whole family when planning meals.
- Use [Canada's Food Guide](#) to help you plan meals. Include a variety of vegetables and fruit, whole grains and protein foods.



Once you've finished your meal plan, use it to make your grocery list, so you always have the foods you need on hand to prepare the meal.

Involve the whole family

- In planning meals, grocery shopping, preparing meals, and cleaning up
- Give age-appropriate tasks for children and teens²
 - 2-3 year old → wash fruits or vegetables, find ingredients in the fridge.
 - 3-4 year old → mash potatoes, take a certain number of ingredients out.
 - 4-6 year old → stir ingredients, set the table, crack & whisk an egg.
 - 6-8 year old → write out the grocery list, toss a salad together.
 - 8-11 year old → use the microwave with help, make a veggie platter.
 - 12 years old and up → any tasks you feel they are able to do.

For more information

- Canada's Food Guide <https://food-guide.canada.ca/en/>
- Dietitians of Canada www.dietitians.ca
- UnlockFood.ca www.unlockfood.ca
- Egg Farmers of Ontario www.mealplanningmadeeasy.ca