

## **Eating Meals as a Family: Fun and Good For You!**

Sitting down for family meals seems harder to do these days when everyone is running in different directions. But a recent study published in the Journal of Pediatrics found young adults who ate just one or two family meals a week as kids were 45 percent less likely to be overweight as compared to those who had never eaten with their families.

Some of the thinking behind this is that when we eat as a family we eat more slowly and intentionally. Parents may be more careful about the kinds of foods they serve. Portion sizes or how much we actually consume tends to be less.

But eating together can also promote connection and a sense of love and belonging which helps reduce the impact of stress on the body. We know that stress can stimulate the production of hormones that can affect our metabolism, or our ability to burn fat. Caring, supportive interaction with other people is one of the most powerful ways to help our bodies release stress.

Faith communities can be a vital resource for encouraging families to eat together. Set a day of the week when congregation members all commit to eating a family meal and offer a time during your religious services for members to report on how their meal went. Create a pack of cards with conversation topics to discuss over a meal. Encourage youth to cook at home one night a week as part of your youth program. Share recipes that are quick and healthy through your social media or on old-fashioned note cards that people can pick up after services or religious education programs.

Eating as a family is fun and doesn't take as much time as you might think. Give it a try!

Prayer: Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, king of the world, who brings forth bread from the earth. (Ancient Jewish blessing)

Wishing you joy and good health,  
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