

EATING TOGETHER, EATING BETTER

With busy schedules, it can be hard to arrange family meals regularly. **Finding the time for family meals is worth it.** Children who eat with an adult almost every day:

- ◆ **Make healthier food choices**
 - Eat more vegetables and fruit
 - Eat less fat and “junk” food
- ◆ **Are more likely to maintain healthy growth and weight**
- ◆ **Do better in school**
 - And have better language skills (use of words)
- ◆ **Are more connected to their families and friends**
 - And have better social skills (such as making friends)
- ◆ **Are less likely to engage in high risk behaviours**
 - Such as smoking, using drugs and alcohol
- ◆ **Have less risk of depression and suicide**

Children and teens say eating together as a family is one of the things they like to do with their parents. Eating together has benefits for the whole family.

Here are some ideas for getting started:

- ◆ Make family meals a priority. Schedule meals the same way you schedule other activities.
- ◆ Share any meal – breakfast, lunch or dinner.
- ◆ To start, eat foods you usually eat. Just eat them together.
- ◆ If children are old enough, have family members take turns choosing and/or preparing the meal items. It doesn't have to be fancy.
- ◆ Keep talk positive and supportive. Focus on the good things that happened in everyone's day, such as things learned at school, holidays, good deeds done, a book you are reading or a joke you have heard.
- ◆ Make preparing a meal and cleaning up family time, too. Give everyone a job; even young children can set the table.

For more information contact:

- ◆ Your local Health Unit
- ◆ HealthLinkBC at 8-1-1 and ask to speak to a Registered Dietitian or www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthyeating/
- ◆ www.ellynsatter.com
- ◆ www.bettertogetherbc.ca