



# Nutrition Edition

Your Guide to Child Health and Nutrition



Nutrition Edition  
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CACFPRoundtable.org

## 7 Unexpected Benefits of Eating Together as a Family

**FAMILY MEALS MONTH** in September encourages people to set aside time at least a few days a week to convene around the dinner table. Sitting down for a family meal (and no, it doesn't necessarily have to be dinner) has resounding benefits for both children and their parents. Eating meals together just might be the ultimate parenting hack. What else can you do in an hour that will improve your kids' academic performance, increase their self-esteem and reduce their risk of substance abuse, depression, teen pregnancy and obesity?

Over the last two decades, study after study has shown that simply taking

a few minutes each day to turn off screens and genuinely connect with each other over food can improve the physical and mental health of all family members involved.

Want proof? Here's some of the most recent research showing the benefits of eating together as a family.

### 1 It can teach better eating habits.

A recent study in the *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)* shows that eating meals with family members is associated with a better diet overall, especially among adolescents. Teens who ate with family were more likely to consume more fruits and vegetables and less fast food and sugary beverages. These findings apply regardless of how functional or dysfunctional a family is, according to the study.

### 2 It can improve self-esteem.

The security provided by regularly breaking bread as a family can help children feel more confident in themselves, according to experts at Stanford Children's Health, a pediatric health-care system affiliated with

*(continued on page 2)*

*Farmer Fran's Fun Facts*



**Crookneck Squash**

- Crookneck squash, also known as yellow squash, is a member of the Cucurbita pepo species that also includes some pumpkins and most other summer squashes. It is characterized by its yellow skin which may be smooth or bumpy and sweet yellow flesh, as well as its distinctive curved stem-end or "crooked neck".
- Crookneck type squashes are believed to be one of the oldest varieties of summer squash, dating back to Colonial America. Crooknecks are recorded as grown by the Arikara tribe in the 1800s.
- Select fresh, bright, small to medium squashes. Avoid very large, hard and over-mature squashes and those with cuts, spots or bruises. To store, loosely wrap in plastic, refrigerate and use within five to seven days.
- Grate and add to fritters, quick-breads, pancakes or raw salads. Peel into thin slices lengthwise and use in lieu of traditional noodles. Sliced thin, it can be layered into lasagna. Slice into rounds or spears and sauté, roast, steam, bake or grill. Halve and stuff with cheeses. Cooked until soft, it may be stewed or pureed into soups.
- Crookneck squash is high in vitamins A, B6, C, folate, magnesium, fiber, riboflavin, phosphorus and potassium.



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## 7 Unexpected Benefits of Eating Together as a Family

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Stanford Medicine and Stanford University. By encouraging your children to talk about their day (and genuinely listening to their responses), you're communicating that you value and respect who they are. Children should be allowed to choose their own seats and be encouraged to assist with chores associated with dinnertime, such as setting the table, serving the food or cleaning up.

### 3 It can prevent serious psychosocial issues.

According to a 2015 review by a group of Canadian researchers, frequent family dinners can prevent issues with eating disorders, alcohol and substance use, violent behavior, depression and suicidal thoughts in adolescents. Young female study participants were especially likely to reap the benefits of family meals.

### 4 It can improve communication skills.

A 2018 Canadian study that followed a group of children from infancy through childhood found that participants whose families had positive meal experiences at age 6 showed a range of positive benefits by age 10. Besides general health and fitness, the social interaction and discussions of current issues at the table can make children better communicators, noted the study's supervisor, Université de Montréal Psychoeducation Professor Linda Pagani, in a Science Daily interview.

### 5 It can curtail weight struggles in adulthood.

A study published in the *Journal of Pediatrics* found a direct correlation between the frequency of shared family meals in adolescence and reduced odds of obesity or weight issues 10 years later, especially among black teens. The study concludes that families should attempt to gather for at least one or two meals each week to help protect their children from weight struggles later in life.

### 6 It can help children bounce back from cyberbullying.

Research published in the *JAMA's Pediatrics* based on a survey of nearly 19,000 students, found clear associations between cyberbullying and anxiety, depression and substance abuse. And with as many as one in five young people experiencing some form of cyberbullying, that's a major problem. However, teens who ate dinner with their families (ideally four or more times each week) reported fewer problems as a result of being bullied. In the study,

the authors noted that the regular family contact facilitated more parental guidance and open communication between children and their parents.

### 7 It can be used to supplement family therapy.

For families who are undergoing therapy together, their shared dinner habits can provide valuable insights on their dynamics to therapists, according to a 2016 study. In addition, families can be encouraged to take lessons learned during therapy to the dinner table, experimenting with new roles and communication patterns.

— Erica Jackson Curran, *Parents Magazine*

#### CHATTING WITH CHILDREN AT MEALTIME

You can make mealtimes even more special by encouraging a climate that fosters communication. When you pay attention to children and encourage communication, you help children create a positive view of themselves and the world they live in.

##### Communicating with toddlers

- Expand on toddler's one- and two-word sentences and build sentences around their word (e.g., Cold that's right, ice cream is cold.)
- Make the most of daily routines and talk them through the sequence in which they will happen (e.g., First I will turn on the water and then add soap. Rub your hands together to get rid of germs.)
- Respond quickly and predictably to toddler's communication efforts (e.g., you are pointing at the refrigerator, are you hungry?)

##### Communicating with preschoolers (3 to 6 years)

- Ask questions and probe for details (e.g., Tell me about a meal you had with your family. What did you have? Who was present?)
- Provide an explanation when offering alternatives (e.g., When you use the serving spoon it is easier to scoop potatoes.)
- Create opportunities to engage in fantasy and pretend play (e.g., Let's pretend you are going to plan a meal for your mom and dad, what would you serve?)

— *Mealtime Memo for Childcare*

## KIDS' HEALTH &amp; SAFETY

# Preventing Concussions

**THE FIRST WEEK OF SEPTEMBER** is Childhood Injury Prevention Week.

Parents and caregivers can play a life-saving role in protecting children from head injuries.

“Your child only has one brain, be sure everything you do is geared toward keeping that one young mind, that one young soul intact.” Bill Curry, Head Football Coach University of Georgia, retired.

A concussion is a type of traumatic brain injury. It is caused by a hit to the head or body making the brain move rapidly back and forth in the skull, stretching and damaging brain cells and creating chemical changes in the brain. There are built-up effects on the brain from repeated concussions.

### Symptoms of a concussion are:

- Loss of consciousness (even briefly)
- Inability to recall events after a hit or fall
- Dazed or stunned appearance
- Confusion
- Clumsy movement
- Answering questions slowly
- Changes in mood, behavior or personality
- Complaints of headache or “pressure” in head
- Nausea or vomiting
- Balance problems, dizziness or double or blurred vision
- Irritation due to light or noise
- Sluggish, hazy, foggy or groggy feelings
- Difficulty concentrating
- “Just not feeling right”

Helmets help prevent concussion when worn correctly. Did you know wearing a helmet can reduce the risk of head injury in a bike crash by as much as 85%!



Helmets should be worn during all wheeled activities, including bikes, scooters, skateboards, skates and hover boards, also during horseback riding, snowboarding, skiing and contact sports.

### Helmet checks:

- Buy a helmet that meets the safety standards of the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) or the Snell Memorial Foundation.
- Place the helmet directly down over the forehead.
- Tighten the chin strap to keep the helmet from slipping forward or backward. Only one finger should fit inside the chin strap.

### Other ways to prevent a concussion:

- Use gates at the top and bottom of stairs to prevent serious falls in infants and toddlers.
- Always use age and size appropriate car seats and booster seats that are properly installed.
- Visit playgrounds with soft material under them like mulch or sand, not grass or dirt.

Sources: [www.preventingchildrensinjuries.org](http://www.preventingchildrensinjuries.org) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

## Crookneck Squash Roasted in Lemon & Olive Oil

Crookneck squash	2 pounds
Olive oil	4 Tbsp
Garlic powder	sprinkle
Pepper	sprinkle
Paprika	sprinkle
Salt	To taste
Lemon	1 large

1. Preheat oven to 400°F. Line a baking sheet with foil. Rinse and trim squash. Cut into 1 inch pieces.
2. Place squash on baking sheet, coat with olive oil. Lightly sprinkle with seasoning. Squeeze lemon juice over squash.
3. Bake 45 minutes or until desired doneness. Serve warm.

Yield: 7 servings

Meets requirement for vegetable.

— *craftycookingmama.com*

## Honey Garlic Chicken

Chicken thighs, boneless, skinless	6	Chicken broth or water	¼ cup
Salt and pepper	to taste	Rice wine vinegar	2 Tbsp
Garlic powder	2 tsp	Soy sauce	1 Tbsp
Canola oil	1 Tbsp	Garlic cloves, minced	6
Honey	⅓ cup	Sriracha Sauce	to taste
		Brown rice, cooked	3 cups

1. Preheat oven to 400°F. Season chicken with salt, pepper and garlic powder. Heat an oven-safe frying pan over medium-high heat, add oil and sear chicken thighs on both sides until golden.
2. Mix together the honey, chicken broth, vinegar, soy sauce, garlic and Sriracha. Pour over chicken, transfer pan to oven and continue cooking for 20 minutes or until thighs register 160°F.
3. Serve over brown rice.

Note: Too hot to turn on the oven? The entire dish can be made on the stovetop, just cover the pan and continue cooking the seared chicken in the sauce, turning frequently, until the chicken is cooked through and the sauce is thickened, about 15-20 minutes.

Yield: 6 servings

Meets requirement for whole grain-rich and meat/meat alternate

— *Karina, Café Delights*

Food Q. What do you call a bagel that can fly?  
 Funny A. A plain bagel!

## ACTIVITY CORNER

### Physical Activity Around the World



### STREGA COMANDA COLORE (ITALY)

This fun outdoor game played in Italy means “witch calls colors” and is a version of tag or chase. One player, the “witch,” calls out different colors one by one. The other players then have to run and try to touch something that is the same color that the witch called. At the same time they are running and finding a colored object, the witch tries to catch one of them. If caught, that child will now take the role of the witch.

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