

Family Meals Selected Annotated References

CASA: The National Center on Addiction & Substance Abuse at Columbia University. The Importance of Family Dinners II. 2005; accessed February 1, 2006. Web Page. Available at: <http://www.casafamilyday.org/PDFs/FamilyDinnersII.pdf>.

Notes: Compared to teens who have five or more family dinners per weeks, teens who have two or less are three times likelier to try marijuana, 2 1/2 times likelier to smoke cigarettes and more that 1 1/2 times likelier to drink alcohol.

Council of Economic Advisers to the President (CEAC) . *Teens and Their Parents in the 21st Century: an Examination of Trends in Teen Behavior and the Role of Parental Involvement*. 2000.

Notes: Analysis of the Adolescent Health Study, using a national probability sample of adolescents and parents. This is the largest federally funded study of American teenagers. It found a strong association between regular family meals (five or more dinners per week with a parent) and academic success, psychological adjustment, and lower rates of alcohol use, drug use, early sexual behavior and suicide risk. Results held for both one-parent and two-parent families and after controlling for social class.

Eisenberg ME, Olson RE, Neumark-Sztainer D, Story M, Bearinger LH. Correlations Between Family Meals and Psychosocial Well-being Among Adolescents. *Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine*. 2004;158:792-6.

Notes: 1998-1999 school-based survey of 4746 11- to 18-year-old middle school and high school students from ethnically and socio-economically diverse communities in metropolitan Minneapolis/St Paul, Minn.

Family meals eaten together per week:

Never: 14%
1-2 : 19%
3-4 22%
5-6: 19%
7: 10%
>7: 18%

As family meals and family connectedness went up, grade point average and self esteem went up and negative parameters went down: depression, suicidal ideation and attempts, cigarette, alcohol and marijuana. Authors dropped out family connectedness in an attempt to illustrate that family meals alone affected dependent variables. Associations with all parameters were considerably weakened and remained significant only between boys with substance use and depressive symptoms.

All items were self-report from the adolescents. Frequency of family meals was assessed with the question, "During the last 7 days, how many times did all or most of your family living in your house eat a meal together?" Family connectedness was measured with two questions, worded to consider each parent separately and therefore add up four questions: "How much do you feel your (mother, father) cares about you?" and "Do you feel you can talk to your (mother, father) about your problems?"

Gillman MW, Rifas-Shiman SL, Frazier AL, et al. Family dinner and diet quality among older children and adolescents. *Arch Fam Med*. 2000;9:235-240.

Notes: A study of the nutritional quality of the diets of 16,000 children ages 9-14 who were sons and daughters of the ongoing Nurse's Study found those children who ate dinner with the family more often had better overall nutrient intakes. Approximately 17% of participants ate dinner with members of their family never or some days, 40% on most days, and 43% every day. More than half of the 9-year-olds ate family dinner every day, whereas only about one third of 14-year-olds did so. The results showed those who ate dinner as a family had a higher consumption of fruits and vegetables as well as nutrients such as folate, calcium, iron and vitamins B6, B12, C and E. Children and teens who ate dinner with their families had an overall lower consumption of fat, soda, and fried foods. Children and teens who never or infrequently ate dinner with their family consumed one less serving of dairy foods each day (about 350 mg of calcium) than those who ate dinner with their family every day. Increased

frequency of family dinner was also associated with substantially higher intake of several nutrients, including fiber, calcium, folate, iron, vitamins B6, B12, C, and E; lower glycemic load; and lower intake of saturated and trans fat as a percentage of energy. We observed little or no effect on intakes of whole dairy products, red meat, or snack foods. Patterns were similar for boys and girls.

Hofferth SL. How American children spend their time. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*. 2001;63(295-308).

Notes: Meal time: The University of Michigan study of children's time found that more meal time at home was the single strongest predictor of better achievement scores and fewer behavioral problems. Meal time was far more powerful than time spent in school, studying, church, playing sports, and art activities. Results were statistically controlled for age and gender of child, race and ethnicity, education and age of the head of the family, family structure and employment, income, and family size

Neumark-Sztainer D, Wall M, Story M, Fulkerson JA. Are family meal patterns associated with disordered eating behaviors among adolescents? *J Adolesc Health*. 2004;35:350-9.

Notes: In general, adolescents who reported more frequent family meals, high priority for family meals, a positive atmosphere at family meals, and a more structured family meal environment were less likely to engage in disordered eating. For example, 18.1% of girls who reported 1-2 family meals/week engaged in extreme weight control behaviors compared with 8.8% of girls who reported 3-4 family meals/week. Making family meals a priority, in spite of scheduling difficulties, emerged as the most consistent protective factor for disordered eating. Associations between family meal patterns and disordered eating behaviors tended to be stronger among girls than among boys.

Taveras EM, Rifas-Shiman SL, Berkey CS, et al. Family Dinner and Adolescent Overweight. *Obes Res*. 2005;13:900-906.

Notes: Of over 15000 9- to 14-year-old boys and girls studied in 1996, 16% had family dinner "never or some days," 40% on "most days," and 44% "every day." Across these categories, overweight prevalence for girls was 19.4%, 16.6%, and 16.7% and for boys was 24.6%, 23.3%, and 22.7%, respectively. In cross-sectional analyses, adjusting for potential confounders, the prevalence of overweight was reduced by 15% among children who ate family dinner on "most days" or "every day" compared with those who ate family dinner "never or some days." Correlations did not hold for longitudinal analysis: Children were not protected from overweight by having had family dinner in the past.

Videon TM, Manning CK. Influences on adolescent eating patterns: the importance of family meals. *J Adolesc Health*. 2003;32:365-73.

Notes: 18,177 adolescents in the first interview of the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health. Almost one in five adolescents reported skipping breakfast the previous day. Adolescents who perceived themselves to be overweight were significantly more likely to have poor consumption patterns. Parental presence at the evening meal is positively associated with adolescents' higher consumption of fruits, vegetables, and dairy foods.

Compiled February 2007 by Ellyn Satter. For more information, see Ellyn Satter's *Secrets of Feeding a Healthy Family*, Kelcy Press.