

make mealtime family time

Goal

Participants will understand the importance family meals play in the health and development of their children and will be motivated to have quality family meals more frequently.

Key Message Points

- A family meal is when parents and children come together to eat and talk.
- Family meals provide many benefits to both parents and children.
- With a little planning any family can enjoy successful family meals.

Learning Objectives

- Participants will value the importance of family meals and will be able to list at least three benefits of family meals, stating which one means the most to them.
- Participants will select one goal for their family's meals, which helps them overcome an obstacle they identified, and pick at least one idea to try that will help them meet their goal.
- Participants will demonstrate the ability to use the weekly meal planner to help them plan ahead and meet the goal they selected.

Supplies Needed

- Name tags and sign-in sheet
- Large laminated poster of family meal
- Washable markers
- Let's Talk About Mealtime brochures (available in both English and Spanish)
- Family Meal Calendar planner sheets
(copied with Grocery list/Design a Dinner on the reverse side)
- Pencils for participants
- Evaluation sheets (2 options are available)

Optional supplies:

- Large laminated poster of ways children eat meals
- Handouts for participants to check off how their children eat meals
- Recipe ideas and foods to taste
- Conversation starter ideas
- Information about parent and child roles to prevent mealtime battles
- Other resources available on web site

This lesson was developed for use in community health and nutrition programs by Purdue University's Center for Families Promoting Family Meals Project, by Emily Hutson, under the direction of Barbara Mayfield, MS, RD, director, with the Indiana State Nutrition Action Plan (SNAP) team.

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Outline

I. Introduction

- A. Welcome participants and introduce yourself
- B. Introduce topic of class
 - 1. Use large laminated poster of family meal.
 - 2. Today we are going to talk about mealtime . . .
- C. Ways children eat meals (Optional, use as time permits)
 - 1. Poster with 8 pictures showing children eating meals and handout
 - 2. Which of the pictures is a picture of a “family meal”?
- D. Participant introductions and sharing struggles with mealtime

II. Body

- A. Defining the family meal
Pass out copies of the brochure: “Let’s Talk About Mealtime...”
- B. Benefits of family meals
Have you heard about any of the benefits of eating family meals?
Write benefits on the large laminated poster using a washable marker.
- C. How to make family meals work for you
Set a goal to make family meals work better for you.
Write your goal and idea on the back of the brochure in spaces provided.
- D. Planning is the key to successful family meals (Omit for shorter classes)
 - 1. Use second handout entitled “Family Meal Calendar.”
 - 2. Provide other handouts and/or point out where they can obtain more resources at the Promoting Family Meals web site.

III. Conclusion

- A. Make Mealtime Family Time Recap what we’ve talked about today.
- B. What family meals mean to me Participant share about benefits.
- C. How my family’s meals are going to be better Participants share goals.
- D. Evaluation and allow participants to ask questions

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Lesson Plan

I. Introduction

Note: If there is a potential for participants to arrive early and/or for there to be a short waiting time before the class begins, do the optional portion of the introduction (Part C), which follows your welcome and intro to the topic.

A. Welcome participants and introduce yourself

Make sure all participants have signed in and put on a name tag.

B. Introduce topic of class

1. Point to the large laminated poster of family meal.
Ask: What does this look like to you? (Expected responses: It looks like a family. They are having a meal. They are at a table. They seem to be enjoying themselves. Everyone is happy and getting along. Etc.)
2. Today we are going to talk about mealtime . . .
we'll think about how *our* family eats meals, we'll share what we find most difficult about mealtime, we'll talk about the benefits of family meals, and we'll think about ways we can make *our* family's meals more like we would like them to be.

C. Ways children eat meals (Optional, use as time permits)

1. Hold up poster with 8 pictures showing children eating meals and provide participants with the handout for them to fill in the number of times in one week their child eats breakfast, lunch, and dinner in each of the ways shown.
Explain: Children eat meals in many ways, which ways does your child eat meals? (As needed, describe each picture and go over the instructions on the handout. Give time for participants to fill in their sheets.)
2. Which of the pictures is a picture of a "family meal"?
Answer: Any of the pictures where parents and children are together.

D. Participant introductions and sharing struggles with mealtime

1. Explain: All parents have struggles sometimes with mealtime. Let's introduce ourselves and share the biggest obstacles we face at mealtimes. (Begin by telling your name again and an obstacle you currently face and/or one you faced in the past.)
2. Invite participants to say their name and one obstacle they face, going around the room. Do not discuss solutions, simply acknowledge that the obstacles they face are ones others also struggle with.

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II. Body

A. Defining the family meal

Pass out copies of the brochure: "Let's Talk About Mealtime..."

I think we can all agree that this picture isn't always the way family meals look like. You might be wondering: Do family meals *have* to be with *everyone* in the family present? Do they have to be at *home*? Do they have to be at a *table*?

To answer those questions, look with me at what is written under the picture. (Read or invite a participant to read out loud.)

A "family meal" is when the people you live with come together to eat and talk. It can include everyone or it can be just you and your child. Family meals don't have to be fancy, and they can be eaten at home or away. They are best when you can talk and listen to each other away from the noise of the television.

Do you agree with what is written in bold print on the cover? *Mealtime can be your family's time for sharing good food, laughter, and love.*

B. Benefits of family meals

Keep your brochures closed for now. Have you heard about any of the benefits of eating family meals? As participants suggest benefits, write them on the large laminated poster using a washable marker.

Now open your brochure, look at the left hand side:

Sharing meals builds stronger, healthier families in many ways.

Did we think of all the benefits that are listed? (Discuss any they are interested in. Access info at web site for more to explain about each one.)

Are there any benefits you hadn't thought of before?

Do any of these benefits surprise you? Do you doubt any to be true?

What do these benefits mean to you?

C. How to make family meals work for you

Consider the questions on the front of the brochure: Would you like your family's meals to be easier? More often? More pleasant?

Think about the struggles you shared earlier, or others you have thought about. How would you like your family's meals to be different?

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On the right side of your brochure you will set a goal to make family meals work better for you. Choose one goal to start with this week from the left hand column and an idea to try from the list to the right of your goal. Write your goal and idea on the back of the brochure in the spaces provided. Once you meet your goal, pick a new one.

Talking points for instructor to assist with selecting goals:

You might pick the goal that matches your biggest obstacle and from the list next to that goal you can choose the idea that fits your situation best.

For example:

1. If you have trouble finding time for your family to eat together, you might pick the first goal, which is "Find time for family meals." If you would like to eat together more often, think about when that is possible and set a reasonable goal, even if it's just a couple of times.
2. If you don't have a good location to eat together, the next goal might be the one to pick: "Find good places to eat together." You might clear off a table that is loaded down with papers and junk. If you don't have a table or you need more chairs, you might look for what you need in garage sale ads. Family meals can even be a picnic on a blanket, or eaten inside a restaurant rather than at home.
3. If you have trouble thinking of meals that are quick and easy and never feel like you have food you need on hand, the next goal is the one for you: "Eat easy, healthy, and tasty meals." Maybe you do all the cooking and you'd like to get your family more involved. Maybe you're just feeling in a rut and you'd like to try some new recipes.
4. Lots of families have the TV on during meals, making it harder to talk and listen to each other. To give your family the most benefit of eating together: "Focus on family, not the TV." Think about talking with your family about turning the TV off during meals. If you need ideas for starting conversations, I can give you ideas (and/or resources).
5. "Enjoy family time together" is a good goal to pick if you feel like your family's meals are chaotic and you are tired of mealtime struggles with your children. If you need to learn more about parent and child roles to avoid mealtime battles, I can show you where to get this information (or make resources available).

Note to instructor: The ideas listed on the right are based on Stages of Change.

If the participant is just beginning to *contemplate* making this change, encourage them to simply "think about it," listed as number 1 in each list. If they are in the *preparation* stage, they are ready to tackle idea 2 in each list, which is an idea that will help them get ready to take action. If they are ready for *action* or have just started working on the goal but want to do it better, idea number 3 is the best choice. For participants who are in *maintenance* and need fresh ideas or bigger challenges, pick idea 4.

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D. **Planning is the key to successful family meals** (Omit for shorter classes)

1. Pass out second handout entitled "Family Meal Calendar."

Explain: You can fill this out partially or completely depending on what your goals are. If you want to plan breakfasts or lunches too, I can give you more copies. (You can download copies from the web site.)

If your goal is to find time for family meals and you can only schedule three dinners together this week, then fill in the columns for those 3 days listing who will be able to be there, the location you will eat together and when you can eat together. Try to think of ways other people can help you get the meal ready, or list other time saving ideas, like using a crock pot and getting the meal ready before you go to work in the morning.

The back side of the handout can help you plan your menu. The right side has a guideline called "Design a Dinner" that suggests that a healthy meal looks like this: it is about half fruits and vegetables, about one-fourth a starchy food, like a whole grain bread, rice or pasta, and about one-fourth a protein food like lean meat or legumes.

Once you have your family meals planned, you can use the left side of the back to make a grocery list so you will have all of the foods you need on hand.

2. Provide other handouts and/or point out where they can obtain more resources at the promoting family meal web site.
3. Optional: Demonstrate an easy family meal item and/or provide samples to taste and recipes.

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III. Conclusion

A. Make Mealtime Family Time

Let's recap what we've talked about today:

- A family meal is when parents and children come together to eat and talk. A family meal can be with just one parent and one child. Family meals can be at home or away. They can be plain or fancy. Family meals are best when the TV is off and family members can talk and listen to each other.
- Family meals provide many benefits to both parents and children. (Skip to B below if desired here and time allows.)
- With a little planning any family can enjoy successful family meals.

B. What family meals mean to me

If time allows, have each participant share which benefit of family meals means the most to them.

C. How my family's meals are going to be better

Go around the room again and have each participant share their mealtime goal. Provide encouragement.

End by pointing out the family meal slogan at the top of the poster and on the back page of the brochure: **Make mealtime family time.**

D. Evaluation and allow participants to ask questions

Ask participants to fill out evaluation sheets.

Invite participants to ask questions.

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Evaluation

Please tell us what you thought of today's session about family meals:

1. What did you learn about family meals that you didn't know before?

2. What obstacle to having family meals is the biggest challenge for you?

3. What benefit of having family meals means the most to you?

4. What goal are you going to work on to make your family's meals better?

5. Do you need any more information or help to meet your goal?

6. Did you feel comfortable talking in the group and sharing your ideas?

7. Would you recommend this session to others? Why or why not?

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 4. Would you recommend this session to others? Why or why not?

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