

FAMILY MEALTIME: MUCH MORE THAN JUST A MEAL

What is a family meal?

A “family meal” is when the people you live with come together to eat and talk. It can include everyone or just you and your child. Family meals don’t have to be fancy, and they can be eaten at home or away. Meals are best when you talk and listen to each other with no distracting electronic devices.

Do family meals make a difference?

Family meals are a simple way to build healthy relationships and promote health. Coming together as a family to share meals is associated with many benefits. Here are four:

Connection: Children and adults thrive on human connection. Eating meals together provides a great opportunity to connect with family and friends. Children — even teenagers! — thrive on having a mealtime routine they can count on. To make the most of the opportunity, turn off televisions, cellphones and other distractions. Gather at a table or somewhere you can focus on one another.

Emotional well-being: Families who eat together have children who are less likely to be depressed and less likely to engage in risk-taking behaviors, such as smoking, drugs, and drinking alcohol. Family meals are also associated with a reduced risk for eating disorders.

Academic success: At meals, children practice important social skills, such as taking turns and engaging others in conversation. Children increase their



vocabulary and learn how to express ideas at family meals. These benefits help explain why children who eat family meals more frequently are found to do better in school.

Healthier eating habits and weight: Meals planned and prepared for family meals are generally more nutritious than meals eaten alone or on the run. Family meals also provide an opportunity for parents to model good eating habits and attitudes about food. Family meals are associated with healthier weights in children and adults.

How can families succeed at having meals together?

Make family meals a priority – Parents and children make time for what is important to them. Prioritize family meals over other activities as often as possible. Schedule them on the family calendar, even if only once a week. Recognize that eating is an essential activity. Do it together rather than apart.

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Health & Human Science News

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

September 2022

- 5 Labor Day, County Offices Closed
- 12 Extension Homemakers Executive Council Meeting, 2:00 PM
- 12 Extension Homemakers President's Council Meeting, 3:00 PM
- 20-24 Bluffton Street Fair
- 30 Extension Homemakers Quarter Fundraiser Due \$10 per member



October 2022

- 4 ServSafe Food Handlers Certification Class, 8:00 AM—4:00 PM
- 10 Columbus Day, County Offices Closed
- 11 ServSafe Food Handlers Certification Exam, 9:00 AM
- 12 Volunteer Community Support Work Day, 9:00 AM—11:30 AM
- 27 International Night, 7:00 PM



November 2022

- 8 Election Day, County Offices Closed
- 11 Veterans Day, County Offices Closed
- 14 Extension Homemakers Executive Council Meeting, 2:00 PM
- 14 Extension Homemakers President's Council Meeting, 3:00 PM
- 24-25 Thanksgiving, County Offices Closed



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

The 4-H Pancake and Sausage Booth during the Bluffton Street Fair, September 20-24, is in need of volunteers. Help is welcome during any shift but especially during the Thursday, Friday and Saturday day shifts. To volunteer, call the Extension Office at 824-6412, or go to bit.ly/4HPancake2022. Thank you!

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Plan for family meals – Look at your schedule and determine the days and times that eating together is possible. Decide what you will prepare; make sure you have what you need on hand. A weekly menu plan prevents last-minute worries about what to cook. Shopping for the week saves time and money – and reduces stress. Use time-saving strategies, such as doubling a recipe and freezing half for a future meal.



Share preparation tasks – Involve everyone in age appropriate tasks, including meal planning, finding recipes, grocery shopping, cooking, setting the table, and cleanup. Young children can do a variety of kitchen tasks. Older children can plan and prepare meals. Parents get valuable help and children learn lifelong skills.

Make meals enjoyable – Create an atmosphere where everyone feels relaxed and valued. Engage everyone in conversation. Use conversation starters to get people talking. Avoid battles over food – parents provide and children decide how much to eat of what is offered.

Tips for families of ...

Preschoolers

- Establish mealtime routines that prevent “hangry” young children. Include well-spaced meals and snacks. Provide sensible “appetizers,” such as raw veggies, while waiting for a meal. Give “warnings” to prepare for meals, such as turning off devices and washing hands.
- Involve young children in one or more meal-related tasks: picking out produce at the grocery store, pouring and stirring ingredients, dishing their own food, clearing their plate.
- Help young children learn the art of conversation. Allow them to tell stories about their day. See the link below to conversation starters for more ideas.

School-age kids

- Create a meal planning calendar. Ask your children to search for recipes online, make a shopping list and carry out prep from start to finish for one or more meals each week.
- Meal preparation helps school-age children practice math skills, food science, and creativity.
- Establish boundaries during mealtime that prohibit or limit the use of electronic devices. Engage children in conversation. Show them you value their opinions and ideas.

Teenagers

- Scheduling is tricky. Be creative. Commit to as many meals together as possible – and make them happen by planning ahead.
- Meal planning and preparation are valuable lifelong skills. As often as possible, let your teenager be in charge.
- Teens need family connection as much or more than ever, so maintain a “no electronic devices” rule at your family table. Set an example by following the rule yourself.

Source: Purdue Publication HHS-832-W



Purdue Cooperative Extension Service will be offering a Retail Food Certification class on October 4 & 11, 2022. This is for food handlers who need to obtain a Retail Food Certificate. The class will take place 8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. October 4th. The exam will be administered at 9:00 a.m. on October 11th. A photo ID with signature is required to take the exam.

Pre-registration is required by September 27th in order to receive a textbook and avoid a \$20.00 late fee. Walk-ins will not receive a textbook. English and Spanish exams are available per registration. Register at Cvent online at <https://cvent.me/1OAKGI>.

For more information call Molly Hoag, Wells County Extension Educator, 260-824-6412. The class will be at the Wells County Community Center, 1240 4-H Park Road, Bluffton, IN.

EXTENSION HOMEMAKER COMMUNITY
SUPPORT WORKDAY

NEW DATE!
Wednesday, October 12

9:00 AM—11:30 AM
Wells Co. Community Center, 4-H
Park, Bluffton

Come help us make lap blankets for nursing homes. You might want to carry along your favorite scissors. Invite a friend or neighbor and join the fun and fellowship.



International Night

Thursday, October 27
7:00 PM

Wells Co. Community Center
4-H Park, Bluffton



Traveling the fast lane of the Autobahn to the slow lanes of small villages, Rachel Phillips Mettiuz, former Norwell and Rose-Hullman graduate, spends much time in Germany working for Eli Lilly. She will talk about the differences in the life style between Germany and the U.S. Dr. Rhonda Phillips will talk and show pictures of Germany and Austria.

3 STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESSFUL MEAL PLANNING

Let's face it, life's hectic. Planning ahead may help relieve mealtime stress. Follow these three steps and you'll be planning and prepping nutritious and delicious meals that fit your preferences and lifestyle!

Step 1: Make a Menu

First, think about your approach to meal planning — do you:

- Want to make a weekly or a monthly plan?
- Prefer to prepare meals ahead of time, just before the meal or a combination of both?
- Want to pick a day to cook meals for the week or a month that you can store in the freezer?
- Need to consider any special nutrition needs for yourself or your family?

Next, either on a sheet of paper, in your phone or on the computer, create your menu:

1. **Take a minute to read about how to put together a healthy meal** and make sure you are getting the right amount of each food group.
2. **Flip through cookbooks or online sites and find recipes that look good.** Evaluate the level of cooking skill required to make the recipe. Do you have those skills? If not, are you up for the challenge? Also, make sure that you have any special cooking utensils or pans needed for the recipe.



3. **Check in with your family about their schedules and meal preferences.** Weigh those factors as you put together your menu.
4. **Think about the weather.** Hearty soups and stews are ideal for a cold winter's night. A salad with lean protein can make a perfect entrée on a hot summer day. If you are packing lunches, make sure any perishables can be stored in a refrigerator or in an insulated bag with an ice pack.
5. **Find out what ingredients you already have on hand.** It is best to continually rotate foodstuffs rather than store them for long periods of time. So, try to use up the items that you have on hand. You'll also save money!
6. **Check out the sales at your local supermarkets.** Sometimes a discounted price can allow you to treat yourself and your family to a special meal. Remember: produce that is in season tends to be less expensive.
7. **Aim for variety in meals; but, don't feel like every day must be different.** It's OK to have oatmeal or low-fat yogurt with berries several times a week for breakfast. The same goes for lunch; pick a few options and rotate them across a week. Jot down breakfast, lunch and dinner options. And, don't forget about snacks.
8. **Think about how to handle leftovers.** Might you serve them again that week or freeze them for another week? Remember to consider food safety, as refrigerated leftovers should be used up within three to four days or frozen for later use.
9. **Run the menu by others in your household.** Does it look good to them? Make any adjustments needed.
10. **During the week, keep notes about how well the menu worked.** These notes can remind you of ways to improve your recipes and menu.

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Step 2: Stock Your Pantry and Freezer with the Five Food Groups

To help get started with meal planning, take time to stock up on the basics. This includes healthy foods that you like to eat and prepare. The lists below provide pantry and freezer items to stock up on from the five food groups. Circle the items you want to stock in your pantry and freezer. Plus, add other items based on your personal health needs and food preferences.



Five Food Groups Pantry List

Vegetables: Keep a variety of canned tomatoes in stock (diced, crushed, whole, stewed). Use them in soups, stews, sauces, casseroles and more! Also, pick up a bottle of your favorite spaghetti sauce. Dried mushrooms are another great pantry item because they can add depth of flavor to your meals.

Fruits: Raisins, dried cranberries, dried apricots and other dried fruits are loaded with dietary fiber. They add a punch of flavor to your morning breakfast, midday salad and dinner grains.

Milk and Dairy Products: Dried milk is a great back-up item to have on stock. You can use it in your coffee or tea. Boxed milk is also available in single-serving packages and is a great item for lunch boxes. Evaporated milk, available in cans in the baking aisle, can be substituted for liquid milk in most recipes.

Protein Foods: Stock up on canned or dried lentils, black, pinto, cannellini, garbanzo and kidney beans. These legumes are a great source of protein. Toss cooked beans in salads, soups, stews and other dishes. Canned tuna, anchovies and sardines are a pantry must — they are a quick way to add protein, healthy fats and flavor to meals.

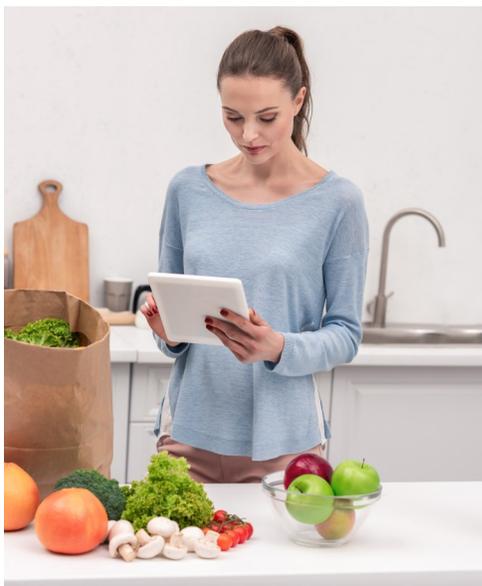
Grains: Keep a stash of oatmeal, buckwheat and other whole-grain cereals in the pantry. For an extra boost, add nuts and fresh berries to these hot cereals. Barley, farro, quinoa and other grains provide staples for healthy meals. Also, keep a variety of rice on hand — long grain, short grain, basmati and brown rice. Spaghetti, ziti, penne and other pastas are great for an easy, quick and filling family meal. Give yourself an extra nutrition boost by buying whole-grain pasta or trying pasta made from legumes.

Also, stock up on:

- **Condiments:** Ketchup, mustard and relish can be stored in the pantry until they are opened. Once you open them, keep them in the fridge.
- **Oil and vinegar:** Extra-virgin olive oil is a versatile, heart-healthy option. Other oils, such as peanut, walnut and sesame add a burst of flavor to meals. Pick up different types of vinegar, such as cider, white and balsamic. Each imparts a unique flavor to your recipes.
- **Stock:** Vegetable, chicken and beef stock are the basics of many recipes. Opt for those are low-sodium or contain no added salt.
- **Herbs and spices:** Pick up small containers of ground herbs and spices. That way they are as fresh as possible when you use them.
- **Flax and other seeds:** Flax and chia seeds deliver of protein, fiber and omega-3 fatty acids. Add them to cereal, salads, sauces and home-baked goods. If you buy whole flaxseed, make sure you grind it up before eating so your body can absorb the nutrients.

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3 Strategies for Successful Meal Planning Continued From Page 6



Five Food Groups Freezer List

To help make sure you don't store food beyond freshness, put dates on the packages before storing in the freezer. And, use the oldest first.

Vegetables: Pick up some of your favorite frozen veggies. These are a great source of vitamins, minerals and other nutrients because the flash-freezing process locks in the nutrition. Look for packages without sodium. And, while you are in the produce aisle, grab some fresh herbs. When you get home, fill ice cube trays with chopped herbs, top off the herbs with boiling water, and carefully place in the freezer. Add these herbs cubes for a punch of freshness to your meals.

Fruits: Stash frozen berries and other fruits in the freezer. They are a great way to add nutrition to a morning smoothie.

Milk and Dairy Products: Freeze Parmesan and other pre-shredded cheeses — toss them into soups, stews and pasta dishes. Low fat, frozen yogurt can be a quick dessert for a special occasion.

Protein Foods: Stock up on salmon and other fatty fishes to ensure you have ready access to healthy fats. Frozen lean meats and poultry also store well in the freezer. One tip: make sure you move it to the refrigerator one day before cooking to give adequate time for defrosting. Keep a variety of nuts in the freezer. This helps prevent them from spoiling. Add them to cold cereal, salads, hot grains and other dishes.

Grains: Whole-grain corn tortillas freeze well and can be used for quick breakfasts, lunches or dinners. Can't eat that loaf of bread fast enough while it is fresh? Make it a habit to freeze part of the loaf and defrost slices as you need them.

Step 3: Keep a Running Grocery List

In a convenient place keep a pad and pen and, as you use up grocery items, write them down on the list. This way you don't have to worry about forgetting anything when you hit the supermarket. Or, use an app for that.

There are many grocery shopping apps available for both iOS and Android platforms. Some apps even include information on where to get the best deals on food prices. For example, after you enter your list, the app might suggest which local supermarket has the best prices for those items. Others allow you to sort your list into categories for ease of shopping. And, meal planning options also are special features of some apps.

On your list — be it paper or app-based — compile the needed ingredients for the meals you plan to make for the week. Also, think about how often you are able and want to shop. Plus, think about your plan for meals and check to see what ingredients you already have and what items you need. Remember to check the cabinets, pantry, fridge and freezer. Ideally, you want to continually use what you have on hand so that your meals are made with fresh ingredients and this will also help reduce food waste.

Source: www.eatright.org



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Wells County Office
1240 4-H Park Road
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Thank you to the Wells County
Extension Homemakers for generously
donating their time to serve as Expo
Hall Hostesses during the 4-H Fair.

We greatly appreciate your support!

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Molly M. Hoag, Editor
Extension Educator
Health and Human Sciences
PURDUE UNIVERSITY
Cooperative Extension Service
Wells County Office
1240 4-H Park Road
Bluffton, Indiana 46714
Telephone: 260-824-6412
Email: mhoag@purdue.edu

Webpage: www.extension.purdue.edu/wells

Also find us on:



Purdue Extension Wells County
or *Molly Hoag-Purdue Extension*

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