Do family meals matter?

Picture courtesy of Purdue University Center for Families’ Promoting Family Meals Project: www.cfs.purdue.edu/CFF/promotingfamilymeals
Improved nutrition:

↑ fruits and vegetables
↑ grains
↑ calcium-rich foods
↑ protein
↑ iron
↑ fiber
↑ vitamins
↓ soft drinks and snacks

Neumark-Sztainer, JADA (103), 2003
Communication

• Oprah Winfrey “Family Dinner Experiment” 1993

• Nutrition Education Network of Washington
  - Focus groups w/ low-income program participants
    1. Primary benefit: strengthening the family
    2. Provide opportunities for communication and building relationships
Better adjustment

Harvard: studied 65 children over 8 years

• What activities most fostered healthy child development?
• Play, Story time, Events w/ Family Members, other factors?
• Family Dinners won
Fewer behavioral problems:

- 5 meals/week →
  ↓ drugs, depression, trouble

(B. Bowden, Cincinnati Children’s Hospital)
Resources

Eat Better Eat Together

– WA State Dairy Council
  • www.eatsmart.org

– WA State WIC Office
  • http://www.depts.washington.edu/vitalwic/family.htm#english

– WA State University
  • http://nutrition.wsu.edu/ebet/index.html

CASA Family Day
  • www.casafamilyday.org
What is our key message?

What would help Alaska WIC families eat better?
Family Meals & Breastfeeding

The Heart of Good Eating
1st opportunity for good eating

• Breastfeeding!
  – Self-regulated intake
  – Variety of tastes, flavors
  – Bond w/ Mom

(Photo courtesy Mommy-place.com)
Benefits of *Breastfeeding* in message

- WIC… who better?
- Opportunity to promote duration
- Exclusivity message
- Opportunity for message to ALL populations
Goals of WABA… 2005 campaign

1. Value of continuing to breastfeed children to 2 years or beyond.

2. Raise awareness of the risks and costs of introducing other foods and drinks to breastfed babies before 6 months, thereby strengthening support for 6 months exclusive breastfeeding.

3. Up-date information and ideas about the kinds of other foods and drinks needed by older breastfed babies and young children after 6 months.

4. Share ideas for making complementary feeding easier, healthier and a time for learning and love.
Duration, duration, duration…

Infants who are only fed breast milk the first 6 months have best start to healthy eating.

Continue to breastfeed 12 months or longer, up to baby’s 2nd birthday is best.
Complementary Foods

Starting solids… *at the family table*

- Appropriate foods
- Nutrition needs
- Stages of development

Photo: toddlerstoday.com
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Core Tasks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Older baby</td>
<td>• Core tasks:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-9 months</td>
<td>– Give baby many chances to like new food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– Have family meals the child is working toward joining</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Almost toddler</td>
<td>• Core tasks:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-15 months</td>
<td>– Include the child at family meals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– Give attention but not all the attention</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Ellyn Satter; Secrets to Feeding a Healthy Family. 2004*
Toddler  
11-15 months

Core tasks:
- Have family meals; scheduled snacks
- Eat with the child
- Teach the child to behave at mealtime
- No short order cooks

Preschooler  
2-3 years

• Core tasks:
- Maintain structure of meals and snacks
- Do not force, reward, shame
- Parent’s eat with a child; not just feed
- Make mealtimes pleasant

Ellyn Satter; Secrets to Feeding a Healthy Family. 2004
Ellyn Satter

- Division of responsibility…
  - Parent: What, when, where
  - Child: How much, whether

Today’s crisis is not child overweight … It is a crisis of feeding and parenting.
The hand that feeds us is in some danger of being bitten.

RALPH WALDO EMERSON
Support for Mom as primary family “feeder”

Possible scenario at family table:

- **MOM**
  - Overtired
  - Trying her best

- **Dad**
  - Wants to help

- **TV**
- **Nutrition Info**
  - Tommy
    - Very Vocal about food
  - Tina
    - Picky eater
  - Timmy
    - Always wants more

*Family Meals & Breastfeeding: The Heart of Good Eating*
Can family meals be harmful?

• Controlling & dysfunctional parents
• Studies relate early mealtime experiences to bulimia nervosa. Girls reported:
  – Controlling conversation
  – “Clean their plate”
  – Food used as punishment or manipulation

The future of family meals…

Obstacles to overcome:

• Conflicting schedules
• No time to cook
• Don’t know how to cook
• Would rather watch television
Between-meal snacking?

• Scheduled Snacks vs. Grazing

• Families who have difficulty focusing on each other are more likely to be “grazers”
  – Grazing is for cows… per Nick @ Nite!

• Mindful Eating; Mindful Living
Theme Development… ongoing

FM & BF (Family Meals & Breastfeeding)

• 2005: Announced FM & BF Theme Concept

• 2006: FM&BF key messages developed; borrowed resources from existing programs with similar messages

• 2007: FNP to develop FM & BF artwork, graphics & resources (brochures)
  – FM & BF Incentive ideas ??
How to use FNP theme:

- Discussion Points
- Open-ended questions
- Goal setting
- Referrals for additional information
- Handouts for Reinforcement
Family Meals & Breastfeeding

Discussion points

• Infants who are only fed breast milk the first 6 months have the best start to healthy eating.

• Young children fed at the family table have better eating, self-feeding, and language skills.

• Family meals help communication and build relationships.

• Family meals help children eat better.
Questions To Ask

• What benefits do you see if you breastfeed your baby longer?

• What meals or meal times does your family already eat together?

• What vegetables does your family eat and enjoy?
Setting Goals

1. I will only feed breast milk to my baby for the first 6 months.

2. We will eat together dinner together on Sunday night.

3. We will make two vegetables for dinner this week, one new and one favorite vegetable dish.
Think about the possibilities!

• Expanding the Theme w/ **Same** Key Message
  – Breastfeeding Duration
  – Medical Formulas
  – Food / Formula safety
  – Starting Solids
  – Recipes
  – Cooking w/ Kids
  – Specific Nutrient Information
  – Low budget meals
Mindful Eating, Mindful Living.
9th annual Women’s Health Forum; Juneau AK

Brought to you by the Juneau Dietitians and the SEARHC WIC Program.

"Time is better utilized because the family only cooks one meal."

Families come in all sizes, shapes and styles.
A "family" is one or more adults (parent, grandparent or other) eating together with one or more children or teenagers.

Theme and materials developed by the Nutrition Education Network of Washington and Washington State University.

Courtesy of Susan Hennon; SEARHC WIC