

## MAKING HEALTHY CHOICES: WEEK 16

# Family meal time

What does family meal time have to do with making healthy choices? Eating together as a family has many benefits. It can help improve and maintain relationships, and provides parents with an opportunity to be role models for nutritious eating habits.

Family meal time does not mean only those times when a family sits down together at a table for dinner. The key ingredient is the family coming together without distractions to share food and have conversations that include all family members.

### Make it happen!

A good place to start is to talk to your family about the importance of family meal time and plan for it to become part of your family's routine. Together, decide on some ground rules such as turning off cellphones (or putting them in a different room), turning off the TV or sitting down at the table. Use whatever rules you set as a guide. As long as the key ingredient is included, you can explore what works best for your family.

Try to make this time as enjoyable as possible. Make an effort to choose and plan positive things to talk about. Family meal time is not the best place for criticism or stressful conversation. For example, if you're concerned about how well your child is doing at school, choose a different time to discuss it. If family meal time becomes a negative experience, it will become difficult to make it a part of your family's routine.

Involving kids in menu planning, grocery shopping and preparing food is a great way to get them engaged in family meal time. Empower your children by giving them a chance to make menu choices. For example, let them decide which vegetables are



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### Did you know?

**Children and teenagers who participate in family meals have been shown to perform better at school and have a decreased risk for substance abuse and obesity.**

included. This will help them to be part of the process and make family meal time more interesting for them.

With increasingly busy schedules, it is important to make time for family meals without distractions.

### WEEKLY RECIPE

Remember to wash your hands and prepare food safely.

#### Fun Family Corn Tortillas (makes 12)

1. In a medium bowl, stir together **1½ cups corn flour** and **1 teaspoon salt**. Then add **2 teaspoons vegetable oil** and **1¼ cups of water** and mix with a fork to make dough.
2. \*Place dough on a floured cutting board and knead until smooth, about 5 minutes.
3. \*Divide the dough into 12 pieces and roll into small balls.
4. Flatten each ball of dough between two pieces of wax paper to make a 6-inch tortilla.
5. Heat a heavy skillet on high until very hot. Remove tortilla from wax paper and cook for about 30 seconds. Turn over and cook for another 30 seconds. Remove from skillet, and keep warm with a clean towel.
6. Repeat steps 2 to 5 for each ball of dough.

\*Good step for kids!

Recipe adapted from Michigan State University Extension. (2015). *Eating Right is Simple Recipe Set*.

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To help you be healthy at every stage of life, MSU Extension delivers affordable, relevant, evidence-based education to serve the needs of adults, youth and families in urban and rural communities. Programs focus on helping you gain the skills you need to buy and prepare nutritious, budget-friendly foods, increase your physical activity and stretch your food dollars.

MSU Extension's children and youth programs address needs and issues from birth through age 19, providing parents with educational resources related to your child's development and giving youth the opportunity through 4-H programs to build leadership and teach practical life skills.

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