

# Walk **NEBRASKA**

## **Eat Better – Eat Together**

October is National Eat Better, Eat Together Month and when families eat together, meals are likely to be more nutritious. Kids who eat regularly with their families are less likely to snack on unhealthy foods and more likely to eat fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. Beyond health and nutrition, family meals provide a valuable opportunity for children and parents to reconnect. When adults, children and teenagers eat together, children do better in school, have fewer behavioral problems, and communication improves. When is the last time you sat down and ate a meal with your family? Check out the following tips to make family meals happen at your house.

### **Schedule Family Meals.**

- To plan more family meals, look over the calendar and choose a time when everyone can be there. Figure out which obstacles are getting in the way and find ways to work around them.
- Even if it is only once a week, making it habit of eating together is a great start, and you can work your way up to 2 to 3 times a week.
- Don't forget that breakfast and lunch are meals as well; there are no rules that say family meals should only happen in the evening.

### **Prepare Meals Ahead of Time.**

- It is important to use a shopping list and find time to go to the grocery store so you have foods on hand to create meals.
- Try doing some prep work for meals on the weekend to get ready for the week ahead. On a night when you have extra time, cook double and put one meal in the freezer so there is a backup plan for busy nights.
- Remember that a meal at home does not have to be complicated or take a long time.

### **Involve Kids at Family Meals.**

- Family meals can be fun and it is important to involve kids in them.
- Younger kids can put plates on the table, pour beverages, or fold napkins.
- Older kids can get ingredients, wash produce, mix, and stir. You could even have your teens be the cook for a night and you can be their helper in the kitchen.

During mealtime, make your time at the table pleasant and enjoy being together as a family. Remember to keep your interactions positive at the table. Ask your kids about their days and tell them about yours. Give everyone a chance to talk. If you cannot remember the last time you sat down for a family meal, take the time this October to begin this family tradition.

### **Sources:**

1. KidsHealth. Family Meals. March 2008. Accessed at: [http://kidshealth.org/parent/food/general/family\\_meals.html?debugMode=false](http://kidshealth.org/parent/food/general/family_meals.html?debugMode=false).
2. Washington State University. Eat Better, Eat Together Tool Kit: Ideas for Promoting Positive Family Meals. Accessed at: <http://nutrition.wsu.edu/ebet/toolkit.html>.
3. United States Department of Agriculture. 2010. Features of the Month: Celebrate October with these Themes. Accessed at: [http://healthymeals.nal.usda.gov/nal\\_display/index.php?info\\_center=14&tax\\_level=2&tax\\_subject=258&topic\\_id=1232](http://healthymeals.nal.usda.gov/nal_display/index.php?info_center=14&tax_level=2&tax_subject=258&topic_id=1232).

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