



Spring into Family Meals

Did you know you are your child's teacher? Your child learns from you—including how to eat and what to eat.

In a survey of Maine WIC clients, 98.5% said that it is somewhat or very important to eat vegetables. Yet 47.8% said they cook vegetables for the family they do not personally eat.

Children learn from their parents. Your example is powerful!!

- Children copy your attitudes about vegetables. They will eat vegetables if it is something they see you doing.
- Children will want to try new vegetables or vegetables cooked in a new way if they see you trying them.

Family meals are important! Do you know the benefits of family meals?

- Stronger family bonds—children have a sense of belonging and feel needed
- Better communication with all family members
- Time for role modeling—table manners, family values, even basic cooking skills
- Improved nutrition at a lower cost
- Better grades in school

Limit distractions at meal times so you can focus on the meal and each other. Turn off the TV, computer, and video games. Make sure toys are not near the table.

Encourage your children to participate in all areas of the meal:

- Meal preparation
- Setting the table
- Clearing the table
- Help with the dishes

Remember:

It is your job to choose what to serve, and where and when to serve it.

It is your child's job to choose whether to eat and if so, how much to eat.

Now that I know about teaching my child, I will try to:

- Make sure my family eats together at the table regularly.**
- Make mealtimes pleasant, with nice conversation and no distractions.**
- Praise my child's good behavior at mealtime, not what or how much he/she eats.**
- Decide what is served at mealtimes and not ask my child what he/she wants me to serve.**
- Have set times during the day for all meals and snacks.**
- Avoid letting my child drink all day from a cup or bottle. Instead, I will serve milk or juice at meals or snacks and water from a cup if my child is thirsty between meals and snacks.**
- Avoid serving snacks to my child close to mealtime.**
- Have simple mealtime rules that I can teach to my child. Examples include:**
 - **staying seated during the meal**
 - **chewing with mouth closed**
 - **using a pleasant voice**
 - **treating others with respect**
 - **listening when someone else is speaking**
 - **no "yuk" allowed**
 - **asking to be excused**
- Involve my child in meal preparation and clean up.**
- When I prepare new foods for a meal, also provide familiar foods for my child.**
- Eat the foods I expect my child to eat, and eat the way I expect my child to eat, including snack foods.**
- Call The University of Maine Cooperative Extension for free help with planning & shopping.**



Cumberland County	1-800-287-1471
Hancock County	1-800-287-1479
Waldo County	1-800-287-1426
Washington County	1-800-287-1542

Maine Department of Health and Human Services administers the WIC Nutrition Program. WIC is an Equal Opportunity Program.