

## Eating Together for Health and Fitness

Sometimes very simple changes can make a big difference. Increasing the meals that your family eats together can make a big difference in your health, happiness and even your finances. No time to make a meal? No problem; family dinners are easier than you think.

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### WHY eat together as a family?

- ❶ Families save time, money and hassle.
- ❷ Children learn skills, values and traditions.
- ❸ Children have fewer behavior problems.
- ❹ Children do better in school and on tests.
- ❺ Children and adults get the nutrients they need.
- ❻ Everyone treasures mealtime memories.

### HOW can YOU do dinner quickly and easily?

- ❶ **Plan a weekly menu:** Make it simple or make it detailed. The key is to have a plan for shopping and cooking. Involve the whole family for less stress for any one person.
- ❷ **Cook once, eat twice:** Cut down dramatically on your prep time. Cook and freeze larger batches of key ingredients, like ground beef for tacos and spaghetti sauce.
- ❸ **Keep the cupboard stocked:** Pack your pantry (and freezer) with staples like canned beans, tuna and fruit; pasta, rice and baking mixes; and frozen vegetables.
- ❹ **Use the sandwich advantage:** Nothing is quicker than a sandwich - breakfast (toaster waffles), lunch (whole grain bread) or dinner (pita pocket or tortilla wrap).

### WHAT foods make a perfect family dinner?

- ❶ **Grains:** High-energy carbohydrates, especially whole grains, have a place on every dinner table. A bread machine (with a timer) can serve it up hot right on schedule.
- ❷ **Meat, fish, poultry, and beans:** High-quality proteins provide "muscle" for healthy meals. Do a combo, like beef and beans in chili, for an extra fiber boost!
- ❸ **Vegetables and fruit:** Any meal is perfect for produce. Pack one-third to one-half of your plate with a colorful bonanza of fresh, frozen or canned fruits and vegetables.
- ❹ **Dairy:** A glass of cold, refreshing milk (1% or less) is the beverage of choice for healthy families. Cheese, cottage cheese and yogurt are other tasty calcium sources.

