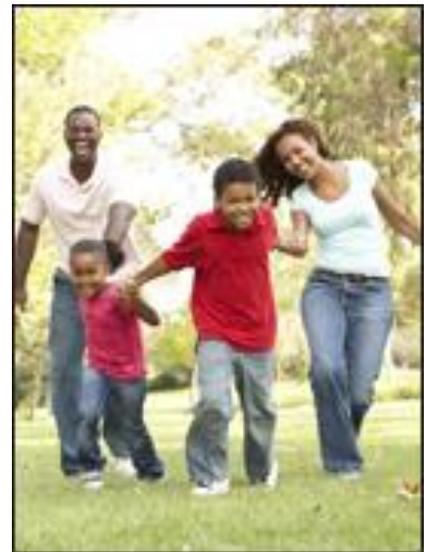


Family Health

It takes a lot to balance work, school, activities, homework, and friends. It's easy to fall back on fast food or take out when everyone is eating at different times and places. Not to mention the lack of time you have to cook a healthy meal. Having easy-to-prepare, family-friendly meals can not only save you money but also promote valuable bonding time and healthier living. Getting the family involved in nutrition through cooking, eating, and talking together can support:

- Eating regular balanced meals
- Better nutrition
- A healthy weight
- The development of cooking skills
- Family bonding
- Setting good examples



INVOLVE THE WHOLE FAMILY

You don't have to be the only one running around. Having more hands helping will make the work lighter. Work with your kids to pick 5–7 meals that are well liked. This helps to minimize fighting over foods. There are simple ways to make the choices

“healthier,” such as adding in more vegetables, swapping in whole grains like whole-wheat pasta, using lean proteins like ground turkey or chicken, and baking instead of frying. You can have your kids help with grocery shopping, mixing cut pieces of fruits or vegetables, breading baked chicken tenders, setting the table, and cleaning up.

PLAN AHEAD

Stock up on healthy pantry staples so you always have items on hand when you are ready to cook. Try purchasing items such as low-sodium stocks, frozen and canned vegetables, no-sugar-added canned or frozen fruits, tomato-based sauces, beans, tuna, whole-wheat pasta, brown rice, or quinoa. These items can be easily added to a slow cooker to boost flavor, protein, and nutrition. To reduce dinner time stress, prepare ingredients on the weekends or on days when you have more time. Wash and chop your vegetables or fruits, prepare big batches of rice, potatoes, cooked vegetables, soup, or a whole chicken. You can even put all the ingredients required for your slow cooker recipe into a freezer bag and stick them in the freezer. Just pull them out in the morning and dump them into your crock pot. When you get home, dinner is done!

MEALS AS A FAMILY GO A LONG WAY



Building healthy habits as a family can support positive behaviors that last a lifetime. Cooking encourages better nutrition and reinforces math skills. Getting up earlier for breakfast helps with time management and can improve focus at school or work. Start with something realistic. One day per week, the family will sit down to a healthy breakfast or dinner together. Twice weekly the family will take a 15 minute walk together. Finally, don't forget to allow kids to use their internal signals to decide how much of what is offered to eat. If they don't like what is being offered, keep in mind that sometimes it can take multiple attempts before a new food is accepted. The best way to get them to try something new is to be good role models and also try it!

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

For support from a registered nurse or wellness coach or to ask questions, please call a Blues On CallSM health coach at **1-888-BLUE-428**.

Log in to the member website listed on the back of your member ID card.

- Click on the **Wellness** tab.
- Click on **Additional Resources** on the left.
- Click on **Health Topics** under **WebMD health information** to search health topics or use the medical encyclopedia to review health issues.

This article does not provide medical advice. It is intended for informational purposes only. It is not a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. Consult your physician before participating in activities described in this article.

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