

Back-to-School DAYS



Tips For Quick Weeknight Meals

together tend to eat healthier, as parents can more effectively monitor their kids' diets, including whether or not their youngsters are getting enough fruits and vegetables, when they are dining together.

While it may not be feasible for parents and kids to scale back their busy schedules, there are steps parents can take to make weeknight meal preparation quicker. By shortening the time it takes to make meals on weeknights, families might be able to sit down to dinner together more often.

* Plan ahead. The most effective way to make more time for family meals is to plan ahead. Planning meals on the fly encourages everyone to fend for themselves, making it difficult for families to enjoy nutritious meals they can eat together. Plan for the coming week's meals on the weekend, when you can survey your pantry and make a trip to the grocery store if need be. Planning

ahead also allows you to prepare certain parts of a meal in advance, which will save you time on busy weeknights.

* Make cold meals. Dinner does not have to be served hot, and cold meals often take less time to prepare. Consider serving salad or sandwiches on those nights when you are especially pressed for time. When serving sandwiches, serve them on whole grain bread to add some nutritional value to the meal.

* Turn breakfast into dinner. There are no laws regarding what qualifies as dinner and what does not, so families without much time on their hands on a weeknight can turn breakfast into dinner. Eggs are both quick and easy to prepare, and they can be served alongside toast and grapefruit. When making omelets for dinner, add some spinach or another vegetable to make the meal more nutritious.

* Lean on seafood more often. Seafood can be healthy and delicious, but that's not the only reason it's an ally to time-strapped families. Seafood should not take much time to cook, as even those dishes that take more time than simpler

dishes like sauteed shrimp will still take less than 30 minutes to complete. That's significantly less time than meals in which beef, pork or poultry is the main entree.

* Leftovers aren't just for lunch. Leftovers are often relegated to lunch, but ex-

tras from a meal cooked over the weekend can be used as a quick go-to meal on a hectic weeknight. If the family enjoyed the meal the first time around, there's no reason they won't enjoy it again. When eating leftovers for dinner, make sure the

leftovers are fresh, but try to avoid serving leftovers the night after they were initially cooked.

Enjoy meals as a family is a great way for families to eat healthy and stay engaged in one another's lives. And even families with hectic

Enjoying a meal together on a weeknight is a goal for many families. But adults often find themselves pressed for time on weeknights, and that time crunch can make it difficult to enjoy a homecooked meal.

But time is not the only thing getting in the way of family meals. Be it after school activities, long commutes or late hours at the office, many things can make it difficult for a family to sit down and enjoy a meal together. The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse notes that family dinners are one of the most effective ways for parents to engage in the lives of their children. Studies have also shown that families who eat

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