



Nutrition for Family Living

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October, 2000 Topics

Family Meals:

Engaging and Educating Kids in the Kitchen

Family Dinner and Diet Quality Among Older Children and Adolescents

Your Kids Are What You Eat

Implications for Extension Educators

Good Breakfast for Good Learning

Wisconsin Food Stamp Program Evaluation Summary

It's National Eat Together Week (October 1-7), so this is a good time to promote family meals.

Engaging and Educating Kids in the Kitchen

The National Pork Producers Council (NPPC), sponsor of National Eat Together Week, encourages families to spend time together preparing and eating meals. Cooking dinner together allows parents to accomplish three things at once: spending time with kids, teaching kids about food, and preparing the family's dinner. Cooking and eating dinner together can also help kids to be more open to trying new foods and eating a more balanced diet.

The NPPC offers these tips for cultivating kids' interests in the kitchen:

- *Up-Front Assignments.* Ask kids to help choose what's for dinner. Have them flip through cookbooks or search the internet for recipes that they think the whole family will like.
- *Mix It Up.* Give younger children several short tasks as opposed to longer, repetitive assignments to keep them engaged and interested. For example, have young kids count out or measure different ingredients rather than peeling or slicing a pile of the same vegetables.
- *Think Hands On.* Kids are very tactile and love mixing items by hand. They can help toss a salad or mix a meatloaf. They also enjoy choosing, counting, sorting and setting things in pans or on trays. Be sure to pay attention to proper handwashing before and after handling food.
- *Get Into The Action.* Utilize kids' natural energy by asking them to season pork chops, chicken or other meats or vegetables by shaking them with spices in a resealable plastic bag.
- *Educate While Having Fun.* Help kids read the recipe aloud, measure ingredients and learn where different foods come from while preparing the meal.



Family Dinner and Diet Quality Among Older Children and Adolescents

While parents think it is important to eat dinner with their children, surveys show that families eat dinner together less often than they used to, and eating together is less common as children get older. Surveys of families that include younger children indicate that 41-46% eat dinner together every day, compared with 27% of families of 12-17-year-olds. Family dinners may encourage healthy eating habits because they typically include foods that are more healthful than those that kids and adolescents would choose on their own. They also provide an opportunity for parents to talk to children about food and nutrition. This is important since children report that their parents are a major source of nutrition information.

A study appearing in the March issue of the Archives of Family Medicine examined the diets of more than 16,000 kids ages 9-14 whose parents participated in the ongoing Nurses' Health Study. In this study, 88% of mothers were employed but the frequency of eating family dinner in this sample was at least as high as in national surveys. Eating dinner with the family was associated with healthful dietary intake patterns. Kids who ate dinner with their families more often ate more fruits and vegetables and had higher intakes of several beneficial nutrients, including fiber, folate, calcium, iron, and vitamins B6, B12, C and E. The authors also observed that kids who ate more family meals consumed less saturated and trans fat, soda, and fried foods. They found no significant increase in full-fat dairy products, snack foods, and red and processed meats as family meals increased.

Gillman, MW et al. Family Dinner and Diet Quality Among Older Children and Adolescents. Archives of Family Medicine. 2000:9(3).



Your Kids Are What You Eat

The eating habits of parents may play an important role in the development of obesity in their children. Researchers at Boston University School of Medicine looked at parents' eating habits as part of the Framingham Children's Study and presented their findings at the American Heart Association's L.J. Filer Jr. Third Annual Conference on Atherosclerosis in the Young. They examined parents' dietary restraint (conscious efforts to restrict food intake), disinhibited eating (impulsive eating), and hunger (whether a person eats in response to internal or external cues). Researchers then looked at changes in children's body fat over six years.

They found the kids whose parents scored highest on either dietary restraint or disinhibition had greater increases in body fat over the next six years than children whose parents scored lower. Children whose parents alternated between dietary restraint and impulse eating gained the most body fat over time. These parents were consciously struggling to restrain their food intake but, by their own report, were prone to eating excessively on impulse even when they weren't hungry.

The authors comment that parents are often unaware that they are passing on their own dietary habits and attitudes to their children. As with many other things, children often do what their parents do, rather than listening to what their parents say. Some parents may emphasize the importance of a healthy diet, but if their own diet doesn't reflect that belief, it's not likely to be a very effective message. Information from this study and others like it can benefit families by pointing out factors that influence children's health behaviors as well as motivating parents to change some of their own habits.



Nutrition for Family Living October, 2000

Implications for Extension Educators

Extension educators can support and encourage family meals as a way to improve the dietary quality of older children and adolescents. Extension can also encourage families to make cooking together an educational, challenging and fun part of mealtime. We can remind parents that their own eating habits have a profound influence on their children's eating habits, and encouraging healthy eating for all family members can improve everyone's health.

A press kit for National Eat Dinner Together Week is available from the Pork Information Bureau. Contact Karen Davis at 515-223-3528.



Nutrition for Family Living October, 2000

Good Breakfast for Good Learning

Research, common sense, and our mothers' wisdom indicate that a child needs a nourishing breakfast to learn. However, for a variety of reasons, many Wisconsin children come to school having eaten no breakfast or an inadequate breakfast.

What can UW-Extension educators do?

The Wisconsin Good Breakfast for Good Learning (GBGL) Campaign is a multi-agency effort to provide resources to be used at the local level to raise awareness of the importance of breakfast as well as information on how to start a School Breakfast Program. These resources are available to you at no cost.

Resources available through the Good Breakfast for Good Learning Campaign:

- Schools can do a breakfast survey to determine how many of their students come to school hungry. Based on a small sample of schools, the GBGL Campaign has found that about 10 percent of elementary school children, 25 percent of middle school children and 30 percent of high school children come to school with no breakfast. *Simple-to-use survey forms are available.*
- Teacher inservices and parent/community presentations can raise awareness of the importance of a nourishing breakfast for children.
- *Scripts and overheads are available* to local instructors for a 20-minute teacher inservice and a 30-45 minute community presentation. A packet of information is available for each participant. Once the inservice or presentation is scheduled, the instructor receives the script and overheads, and the participant materials are sent to the school.
- *The 5 Star Breakfast Toolkit* includes 10-minute lessons on the importance of breakfast, how to implement a school breakfast program and promoting a school breakfast program. The Toolkit was developed by a six-state 5 Star Taskforce, organized by the U.S. Department of Agriculture regional office in Chicago.
- *Other resources include:* "The Importance of Breakfast" display materials, classroom activities, radio and TV public service announcements, and "How to Start a School Breakfast Program" information packet.

UW-Extension coordinators are encouraged to:

1. Use the "Eat Breakfast" fact sheet and other WNEP curriculum materials to teach families the importance of breakfast and give tips to make healthy breakfasts fast and easy. <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/wnep/p6/nfspdfs/Brkfast.pdf>. Use the breakfast activities in the Youth Curriculum Sourcebook (Using the Whole Pyramid p 3 and 63, and several cereal activities in the Grains section)



Nutrition for Family Living October, 2000

2. Order the Good Breakfast for Good Learning flyers to distribute to schools in your counties.
3. Use the flyer to schedule a teacher inservice or parent/community presentation, and to order the classroom activities, “Importance of Breakfast” display materials, and the many other resources available through the Good Breakfast for Good Learning Campaign.
4. Offer to conduct a teacher inservice or a parent/community presentation. Agents or educators have done similar programs in Adams, Lafayette, Oconto, St. Croix, Shawano, and Waupaca counties.
5. Inform school principals, teachers or parents about the Breakfast Survey forms.

For more information, contact Jon Janowski at 414-777-0483 or e-mail: jon@hungertaskforce.org



Nutrition for Family Living October, 2000

Wisconsin Food Stamp Program Evaluation Summary

From the desk of Sherry T.:

Sources: Wisconsin Legislative Audit Bureau, Audit Summary, July 2000

An Evaluation – Food Stamp Program – Department of Workforce Development, July 2000

The Food Stamp Program, created in 1964, is administered by the Department of Workforce Development (DWD) in the state of Wisconsin. The federal government supplies almost all of the money. Administration of the program is shared between the state and the federal government. In Wisconsin, 75% of the participants were either children, disabled, or older than 60 as of January 2000 (See Table 1).

People are entitled to food stamps if they meet both nonfinancial and financial eligibility criteria. However, with the implementation of Wisconsin Works (W-2) not all people who need assistance are eligible for Food Stamps. Wisconsin Works was implemented to encourage self-sufficiency by requiring participants to work and by imposing time limits on public assistance. While the number of people receiving food stamps has declined by 147,370 between 1995 and 1999, alternative food programs that provide nonperishable food and meals have reported increased demand for their services. Some of this shift in the use of food aid is certainly due to decreased food stamp benefits in the presence of higher earnings from required work. Almost 30% of those receiving benefits in January of 2000 received \$10 or less per month. Thus, many people choose not to participate because of reduced benefits. In fact, from 1994 through 1998, the number of people estimated to be living in poverty that did not receive food stamps increased to 120,500; this represents a decrease in food stamp coverage from 97% to 70% of people in poverty.

DWD has identified actions to improve administration and increase participation:

- Reminding agencies to display Food Stamp Program information in visible places
- Making efforts to reduce error
- Improving outreach efforts
- Expanding hours of operation and increasing the number of sites taking applications
- Working with alternative food programs to inform potential recipients of food stamp availability

Unfortunately, making changes to the existing program is quite difficult. Certain efforts to increase program participation would require changing federal law or waivers of existing federal regulations. Moreover, Wisconsin's benefit calculation error rate is quite high: 13.4% versus 9.9% for the nation. It is hoped that implementation of electronic debit cards will increase program participation. The entire state should be switched over to the debit cards by the end of 2000. Special care needs to be taken with certain groups, especially the elderly, during the implementation of the electronic system.



Nutrition for Family Living
October, 2000

Table 1

Profile of Food Stamp Recipients
January 2000

Age of Recipients	Number	Percentage of Total
Under 18	106,210	56.0%
18 to 60 (able bodied)	48,467	25.6
18-60 (disabled)	19,434	10.3
Over 60	<u>15,438</u>	<u>8.1</u>
Total	189,549	100.0%
Gender of Recipients		
Female	113,583	59.9%
Male	<u>75,966</u>	<u>40.1</u>
Total	189,549	100.0%
Ethnicity of Head of Assistance Group		
White	34,470	45.8
African-American	26,203	34.8
Other/Unknown	7,352	9.7
Hispanic	4,413	5.9
Asian	1,779	2.4
American Indian/Eskimo	<u>1,080</u>	<u>1.4%</u>
Total	75,297	100.0%
Earned Income of Assistance Groups		
Number with earned income	24,385	32.4%
Number with no earned income	<u>50,912</u>	<u>67.6</u>
Total	75,297	100.0%



Nutrition for Family Living October, 2000

What about Food Stamp Nutrition Education?

Source: Food Stamp Nutrition Education Study, Final Report, USDA, April 28, 2000

Food stamp nutrition education is both important and popular. According to a federal report from USDA/FNS, three key design features are necessary for successful Food Stamp Nutrition Education:

- Set broad program goals and specific behavioral objectives helping clients select healthful foods on a limited budget and improve food preparation skills
- Target audiences with the most need, i.e. families or pregnant women, persons with disabilities or chronic disease, the homeless and the unemployed
- Focus nutrition messages on purchasing healthy foods and eating a healthful diet; and prepare nutrition messages to meet the needs of specific target populations by developing reliable data collection methods

Food stamp education also has many challenges:

- Ensuring better service delivery coordination between nutrition education activities offered by different agencies
- Coordinating efforts between agencies using different routes of delivery
- Developing appropriate reporting systems

The Wisconsin Nutrition Education Program uses the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, the *Food Guide Pyramid*, and other research-based education resources to develop and implement community-based nutrition education programs that address the diverse nutrition needs of people facing economic challenges. We are working in partnership with community, state and federal organizations to understand the diverse needs of our target audience, offer effective educational programs, and integrate our programs with other services.