



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Celebrate 'Family Dinner Night' on Sept. 24

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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When was the last time you sat down to eat dinner at the table with your family? The Alabama Department of Public Health invites you to join families across the United States Sept. 24 in celebrating "Family Dinner Night" to kick off the Family Dinner Project. This new project encourages families to gather for dinner at least one night per week.

"Some people may wonder why the health department is asking parents to reinstate family meal time," Dr. Donald Williamson, state health officer, said. "The answer is that eating meals together can benefit our health because children have a better nutrition intake when the family eats together. Eating together as a family is another example of a lifestyle change that has the potential for a big impact. "

Unfortunately, it may be hard for many people to remember that taking time to eat dinner together as a family should be a priority. Research shows that families who eat together with the television off are less likely to have children with problems with drug and alcohol abuse, illiteracy and violence. Other potential benefits are increased socialization and communication skills in children and saving on grocery bills.

Obesity is also likely to be lower in children whose families eat together. In a recent issue of the Journal of the American Dietetic Association, research was published proving that there are positive lasting dietary effects on youth who eat with their families. Eating family meals together during adolescence produced adults who ate more fruits and vegetables, consumed key nutrients and drank fewer soft drinks. Health experts are alarmed by the rapid increase of obesity in youth. Eating with the family and reducing television time may be a small step towards reducing obesity.

Family Dinner Night is a component of the international campaign Universal Screen Time Reduction: A lifestyle for the 21st Century. This program will provide information to individuals, families, and communities so they can take control of the electronic media and gadgets in their lives and cut down on their use. For more information visit www.screentime.org starting Sept. 24.

Tips on getting the family together for dinner are as follows:

- Look at your schedules and plan one night when everyone can eat together.
- Find new recipes to try. Watch a cooking show or look through recipes in a magazine with your kids; let them help with preparations.
- Make dinner a special event. Invite a guest to eat with you; light candles.
- Turn off the television during dinner.
- Plan things to talk about at dinner. Make question cards for each person at the table to answer.
- Play some soft music to enhance the mood during preparation, dinner and clean up.

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