



Healthy Eating in Stressful Times: How to Bring Family Together in the Kitchen

Stress can disrupt our eating habits. With uncertainty brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, it's not surprising that unhealthy habits are sneaking in. If your family has turned to increased snacking or meals in front of the TV, you're not alone!

There are many reasons to eat well. It can improve your mood, help balance energy levels, and help to prevent chronic disease. Keep in mind that there's no single nutrient, vitamin, mineral, or natural health product to fight against COVID-19. An overall healthy diet supports your immune system.

Here are some tips to help the whole family make healthy eating a priority during the COVID-19 pandemic:

Stick with a schedule. Having regular meal and snack times adds a sense of rhythm to your child's day. This goes along with a regular sleep and wake schedule. Your body likes routine and so does your child's. Eating regularly fuels your body and helps to keep you from reaching for extra snacks out of boredom or stress. As a family, set a schedule that works for you.

Healthy Children

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Eat together. Meals can be a shared experience and a great time to get together, catch up, and communicate. Even if your family has a busy schedule, try to eat meals together a few times a week. There's no need to be fancy—a sandwich and a fruit can be a quick and healthy meal.

When eating as a family, try to limit technology at the table, like phones, tablets, and TV. Instead, try [conversation cards](#) or listen to music.

Keep it simple. Try recipes with only a few ingredients or steps to make meals easy, quick, and low-cost. Simple meals can also allow kids to help in the kitchen. This helps boost their confidence and interest in food.

- For simple and fun family recipes, check out [UnlockFood.ca/recipes](https://www.unlockfood.ca/recipes).
- Kids can do a lot in the kitchen:
 - At age 5 they can help set the table, stir ingredients, and slice some softer foods.
 - At age 6, children are able to make an easy breakfast.
 - Children aged 8 to 11 can even make and pack their own lunch!
 - [Check out these tips](#) for more information on age appropriate meal planning and tasks.

Model healthy behaviors. Lead by example! Your child will carry these healthy habits with them for life. Kids can share ideas for your family meal plan, create a [grocery list](#), and help in the kitchen.

Talk about your values. Your family's eating habits may reflect the values you share. Talk with your kids about what's important to them, and help them explore how values influence their food and drink choices. For example, if active living is a priority, you might focus on eating well to fuel your physically active way of life.

Connect culture. Find a family or cultural recipe and help your kids make it! Explain the history and meaning behind the recipe. This can help build cultural connections and a sense of belonging.

All families are different! Focus on what works best for you and your family.

Try the following fun, family recipes to help get you and your child cooking:

- [Cinnamon Morning Oatmeal](#)
- [Pita Pizza](#)
- [Tomato Macaroni & Cheese](#)
- [Chocolate Chip Banana Muffins](#)

For more ideas, visit [HealthyEatingStartsHere.ca](https://www.healthyeatingstartsHere.ca)