

## EATING TOGETHER, EATING BETTER

With busy schedules, it can be hard to arrange family meals regularly. **Finding the time for family meals is worth it.** Children who eat with an adult almost every day:

- ◆ **Make healthier food choices**
- ◆ **Are more likely to maintain healthy growth and weight**
- ◆ **Do better in school**
- ◆ **Are more connected to their families and friends**
- ◆ **Are less likely to be bullied**
- ◆ **Are less likely to engage in high risk behaviours, like smoking, alcohol and drug use**
- ◆ **Have less risk of depression and suicide**

Children and teens say eating together as a family is one of the things they like to do with their parents. Eating together is good for the whole family.

Here are some ideas for getting started:

- ◆ Make family meals a priority. Schedule meals the same way you schedule other activities.
- ◆ Share any meal or snack together.
- ◆ To start, eat foods you usually eat. Just eat them together.
- ◆ If children are old enough, have family members take turns choosing and/or preparing the meal items. It doesn't have to be fancy.
- ◆ Keep talk positive and supportive. Focus on the good things that happened in everyone's day, such as things learned at school, holidays, good deeds done, a book you are reading or a joke you have heard.
- ◆ Make preparing a meal and cleaning up family time, too. Give everyone a job; even young children can set the table.

For more information:

- ◆ Your local Island Health Public Health Unit [www.viha.ca/locations/health\\_units.htm](http://www.viha.ca/locations/health_units.htm)
- ◆ HealthLinkBC at 8-1-1 and ask to speak to a Registered Dietitian or visit [www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthyeating/](http://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthyeating/)
- ◆ Elyn Satter [www.elynsatter.com](http://www.elynsatter.com)
- ◆ Better Together BC [www.bettertogetherbc.ca](http://www.bettertogetherbc.ca)