

It's All About Balance: Eat Smart, Move More, Rest Well

## 4 Tasty Ways to Slow Down and Enjoy Dinner

### Give your family meals the time and attention they deserve.

It takes about 20 minutes from the time you start eating for your brain to send out signals that you are full. Give your family a gift by setting aside 25 to 30 minutes for an evening meal wherever you eat. Try it when you are eating at your kitchen table, eat out or having a picnic at the park. Taking plenty of time to enjoy the meal will give everyone the chance to relax even when the schedule is hectic.

### Get the family involved in dinner - from start to finish.

The evening meal does not have to be just one person's job. Even very young children like to help plan and fix healthy meals. Some benefits of family meals may actually develop when children know they are part of the process. Assign jobs that are right for the child's age. Children can choose the fruit for dessert or mix pre-cut vegetables into a salad. They can also set the table or clear the dishes after the meal.



### Create a pleasant, distraction-free zone at the dinner table.

Of all the things that can quickly improve the mealtime mood, this is the most important. Ask the whole family to turn off their electronic gizmos (TV, DVD computer, radio, MP3 player and cell phones) for just 30 minutes. Background music is fine. Keep it at a low volume. The goal is to have a quiet time to enjoy food and being together. A low-stress mealtime also helps you from eating too much and improves digestion after the meal.

### Make family conversations the centerpiece of your time together.

Pleasant conversations make good meals even better. They help young children learn new words and expand other language skills. They help adults learn what is really going on in the lives of young people. They help everyone feel more secure and connected in a confusing and often overwhelming world. For ideas on what to talk about at the table, download conversation cards at [www.eatrightmontana.org/eatrighthealthyfamilies.htm](http://www.eatrightmontana.org/eatrighthealthyfamilies.htm). Look under April 2007.

**Need some help with planning healthy menus?** Go to [www.mypyramidtracker.gov/planner/](http://www.mypyramidtracker.gov/planner/). The planner uses your age, gender, weight, height and level of physical activity to see how balanced your current eating habits are. Then it gives you tips for small changes. **MyPyramid Menu Planner** is designed for busy people who want to make smart changes rather than going on extreme diets.



National Nutrition Month® - March 2009  
Adapted by the Nutrition Services Branch from [www.eatrightmontana.org](http://www.eatrightmontana.org).  
N.C. Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Public Health  
[www.ncdhhs.gov](http://www.ncdhhs.gov) • [www.nutritionnc.com](http://www.nutritionnc.com)

