

September 2009

## Health Matters

### Sharing Food, Creating Fun

Schedules get busy in September and a lack of time can make eating together a challenge. Try to find time to share meals or snacks together with as many family members as possible.

#### **Children who eat a meal or a snack with other family members at least once a day:**

- Develop a sense of belonging, feel more secure and stable
- Communicate better with their parents
- Have fewer behaviour problems
- Do better at school
- Have higher self esteem
- Learn more words (have a better vocabulary)
- Try and enjoy a greater variety of foods
- Eat more fruits and vegetables and less fried foods
- Are less likely to smoke, use drugs, drink alcohol, be depressed or have disordered eating



#### **Tips for Successful Family Meals**



- Make the same meal for everyone
  - Plan a weekly menu with the family and put it on the fridge; have each family member choose one meal or snack they would like to have each week
  - Use your weekly menu to make a shopping list
  - Let children help with the grocery shopping and cooking, not just the clean up
  - Keep meals simple – when pressed for time, buy bagged salads, pre-chopped veggies or roasted chicken
  - Turn off the TV, computer and cell phones
- Take phone calls later
  - Make family meals a routine
  - Allow children to eat slowly or fast, eat just one or many different foods. Let them have more of any food.
  - Teach them to behave at the table
  - Keep conversation pleasant and make sure everyone gets to speak and be heard
  - Keep mealtimes enjoyable

If you have any suggestions for future topics, please contact Kathy Romses, Community Dietitian at 604-904-6200 or [Kathy.Romses@vch.ca](mailto:Kathy.Romses@vch.ca). If you have general nutrition questions, call **Health Link at 811** and ask to speak to a dietitian or visit [www.HealthLinkBC.ca](http://www.HealthLinkBC.ca).