



MENTAL HEALTH

April 2013



With an Improving Understanding of MCH grant, FamilyVoices IMPACT works to develop ways to improve health and wellness for all children and families, and to encourage partnerships between families and professionals for children's good health. www.familyvoices.org and www.brightfuturesforfamilies.org. This digest is funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services—Health Resources and Services Administration—Maternal and Child Health Bureau, Division of Child, Adolescent, and Family Health UCMC21535.

Food, Conversation, and Mental Health!

Want to make a real contribution to your teen's emotional well-being? Make family dinners a regular daily routine!

Canadian researchers found that the simple act of sharing a meal together on a regular basis improved the emotional health of teens aged 11 to 15 years, on such things as problem-solving, helpful behaviors, and even life satisfaction.

This connection was consistent, regardless of age, gender, or economic status. And the connection was consistently stronger the more times a week families ate dinner together.

The researchers suggest that mealtimes provide opportunities for relaxed conversation. Parents can help shape positive health behaviors--including nutritional food choices--as well as giving teens the chance to express concerns and feel valued.

Of course, making a family dinner a daily routine can be challenging to schedule around busy lives. Parents and teens alike are often on the go! But this study suggests that making the effort as often as possible is worth it.

To read more about this study, go to: <http://medicalxpress.com/news/2013-03-03-family-dinners-nourish-good-mental.html#jCp>

Chronic Illness and Mental Health

Dealing with chronic illnesses such as asthma, food allergies, and diabetes can be tough on children and adolescents physically, but can also take a toll on their mental health and well-being.

Children with chronic illnesses are twice as likely to have emotional or behavioral challenges as healthy children.

Tips for helping children and teens cope better with their illnesses include:

- Make sure you and your child understand necessary restrictions and dangers associated with your child's condition.
- Empathize with the child's struggles.
- Give them time and opportunity to talk or journal about their feelings.
- Develop illness action plans for trusted adults, including school staff, grandparents, and babysitters.
- Seek help when needed --for either your child or yourself!



To read more, go to: <http://medicalxpress.com/news/2013-03-child-cope-chronic-medical-condition.html#jCp>