

Dining as a family may create happier, healthier teens

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A new survey reveals that a family sit-down at dinnertime can benefit teenagers in more ways than you may think, and may even reduce your child's risk for trying or using drugs, cigarettes, and alcohol.

Last week, the US National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse released a [report](#) on family dining trends and how family mealtimes can impact the health of teenagers.

The study surveyed more than 1,000 teens and found that 58 percent dine with their families at least five times per week -- a number that has held steady over the years, experts say.

In the report, teenagers who dined with their families five to seven times a week were four times less likely to use alcohol, tobacco, or marijuana than those teens who ate with their families fewer than three times a week.

Also a recent wide-scale UK [survey](#) revealed that dining together is a key ingredient to ensuring your child's happiness.

Researchers stated that children in the survey reported higher levels of happiness when they dined together with their families at least three times a week.

Other factors in increasing childhood happiness? Spending time together. "Contrary to the popular belief that children only want to spend time playing videogames or watching TV," said researcher Dr. Maris Iacovou of the University of Essex, "we found that they were most happy when interacting with their parents or siblings."

WebMD [advises](#) doing things together as a family, putting family before friends, and limiting your child's after-school activities to opt for more time together at home. Also, create a calm environment at home by never arguing in front of the kids, experts say.

<http://ph.news.yahoo.com/dining-family-may-create-happier-healthier-teens-151556667.html>