



We're Cookin' Now!

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As a new year begins, many adults launch diets. Sometimes, they include their entire family on the diet.

However, children should not be placed on a weight-loss diet without first consulting a health-care provider. Reducing the rate of weight gain while allowing normal growth and development is the goal for children's diets.

Eat

As we begin a new year, step back and assess your family's daily diet. Does it have room for improvement?

- Are family members eating, on average, 2½ cups of vegetables and 2 cups of fruit daily?
- Are half of your grain choices whole grain items?
- Do you choose a variety of lean proteins?
- Do you serve calcium sources such as dairy or an alternative?
- Do you encourage your family to drink lots of water?
- Do you limit sugar-sweetened beverages?

Consider setting a monthly family goal for healthful eating, with one small change at a time. Consider this goal: Store crunchy, ready-to-eat vegetables such as carrots, broccoli and cauliflower in containers in your refrigerator for afterschool (or work) snacks.

See <https://tinyurl.com/NDSUMyPlate> for easy-to-read fact sheets.

Most homes have microwave ovens. They can save time, but they also require training and supervision to use. See the "Microwave It Interactive Magazine" at <https://tinyurl.com/microwaveit> to see videos, safety tips and recipes to learn more. For example, do you know what the microwave "marshmallow test" is?



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On-the-Go-Mug Scrambled Egg

- 1 large egg
- 1 Tbsp. milk or water
- 2 Tbsp. bell pepper, diced
- 1 Tbsp. cheddar cheese, shredded

Spray a 12-ounce microwave-safe coffee mug with nonstick spray. Add egg and milk and lightly beat with a fork. Mix in peppers and cheese. Microwave on high for 50 seconds or until firm.

Makes one serving. Each serving has 110 calories, 7 grams (g) fat, 9 g protein, 2 g carbohydrate, 0 g fiber and 120 milligrams sodium.



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Connect

As we begin a new year, take another step back and assess your family's daily interactions. Do they have room for improvement?

- How often do your family dinner conversations include laughing together?
 - Consider asking people to bring a family-friendly joke to the table once a week.
- Do you include everyone in some aspect of food preparation, table setting and cleanup?
 - Think about using a homemade chore chart to rotate jobs among family members.
- Will your family take a vacation this year?
 - Plan a budget, where and when you will vacation and what you will do. If money is tight, camp in the living room and play board games, but be sure to put it on the calendar so it really happens.
- Where can you find minutes to move together in your day?

Resolve to do a physical activity together as a family for 20 to 30 minutes a day.

Use the extra “waiting” minutes in your day for physical activity. Instead of sitting in the car waiting for a school activity to end, walk the halls in bad weather and the track in good weather. Instead of checking social media while the hot dish is in the oven, find a tune you can dance to and encourage everyone to move to the music. Dance party!

See www.ag.ndsu.edu/extension/children_families_finances for more information about children, families and finances.

Savor (the Savings)

Do you find yourself tossing leftover food? Could you make something out of the leftovers to avoid throwing them away? Wasted food in homes accounts for up to 40 percent of total food waste.

Consider these tips:

- Buy what you need and avoid purchasing the bruised or fully ripe fruits at the store unless you can use them right away.
- Use your leftovers as lunches. Leftovers will remain safe to eat for three to four days in your refrigerator.
- Repurpose your leftovers in casseroles, soups, stir-fry, quesadillas or omelets using what you have on hand. Check out the “Pinchin’ Pennies in the Kitchen” guides available on the Family Table website.
- Freeze your leftover fruits, vegetables and other foods. Maintain the good quality of your frozen foods by following the directions provided at www.ag.ndsu.edu/food in the “Food Preservation” section. Click on “Freezing.”



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