

Family Eating Habits

How Do We Change Them?

by Traci Baker

In today's fast paced world, many of us consume food in a very different manner and time frame due to time constraints brought on by our professional/personal commitments. Families are busy with different social functions, school/church events, sports, appointments and the list continues to grow. The convenience of food is continually growing and can be found on any street corner at a fast food chain or your local convenient store.

Then there are the times our minds tell us we don't have enough time to prepare a healthy well-balanced meal. We say things like, "I don't have time to cook," and "Eating healthy is too expensive and healthy food doesn't taste as good." All of these factors can lead to poor family eating habits. What about those meals you prepare and believe you are making a healthy choice? How do you identify if your family's eating habits are poor?

Fun Ideas on How to Change Your Family's Poor Eating Habits

IDEA #1: Tell your family you want to do an experiment for a week about the family's eating habits and you need their assistance. Be creative and give each family member a fun pad of paper or create something simple on your computer to print off along with their favorite color pen. Come up with a prize to work toward at the end of the experiment, such as a sleepover with friends and movie night, new CD/DVD, day at the pool with friends, or a canoe/camping trip.

Start by asking them to write down what they think about the family's overall eating habits. Do they think the family has good or bad habits, and why? Ask each family member to write down their meals and snacks



throughout the next week, the environment while eating (in the car, in front of the TV, standing at the counter, cleaning my plate because mom told me to) and what they do after each meal or snack (took a nap, walked the dog, played basketball, etc.).

At the end of the week, everyone will pass their entries to another family member for review. The goal is to highlight any repeated poor eating habits within the week. Here are some red flags to look for:

- Eating a limited variety of foods
- Indulging in too many foods like soft drinks, doughnuts, chips, candy or ice cream
- Not including all food groups such as vegetables
- Skipping breakfast

Ask everyone to give feedback on any items they highlighted and why they identified those as poor habits, then what a healthier choice would be.

IDEA #2: As a family, make a list of healthy meal/snack choices and post the list in a visible space for everyone to see. Then, make a list of all the recognized poor eating habits and ideas on how to change those to healthy eating habits. Decide together which family members deserve recognition and earn prizes on things such as:

- Identifying the poorest eating habits
- Providing healthier choices
- Creative ways to change those habits

At the end of the week, ask each family member the same question you did before the experiment started. Do they think the family has good or bad habits, and why? Then compare both answers.

Create a plan of action on how to replace the poor eating habits and what other changes will help promote healthy eating habits.

Make this a fun project by including all family members and assigning tasks they enjoy. For example, purchase a bright colored poster board/trifold science board and create a title that fits your family. Make it visual by cutting out pictures of healthy foods, asking someone to be creative and decorate the board, create a healthy food list, list new habits to promote change and keep it visible in the kitchen as a reminder for the family.

Sample Changes to Help You Get Started

Here is a list to help get you started on some changes to promote healthy eating habits:

1. Keep only healthy food options in your home. Have a family participation session to “purge the pantry” and remove all items not on your healthy list.
2. Pick a specific time frame each night and agree to designate this as “family dinner time” with no interruptions.
3. Make it a habit to sit together at a kitchen or patio table to encourage the importance of doing this together as a family.
4. Slow down – it takes our minds 20 minutes to catch up with our stomachs. Practice putting your fork down between bites to force yourself to eat at a more leisurely pace. Engage in conversation as another way to slow your pace of eating.
5. Stop eating when you feel full. The “clean your plate” mentality will lead to extra unnecessary calories in your body.

Ask each person to pick a day of the week and create a healthy meal plan and then help by preparing the meal. Make it fun by adding a theme, (Mexican, American, Italian, etc.) researching the Internet for healthy recipes or a specific color and use paper/plastic (cups, utensils, plates, napkins) to set the table.

Be creative, have fun and step out of your comfort zone while tasting new healthy food items. By encouraging your family to stay involved and repeating these behaviors, their healthy eating will become a daily habit!

About the Author:

Traci Baker is a professional in the field of bariatrics at the IU Health Bariatric & Medical Weight Loss. She is also the president of Bariatric Life Coach Association, LLC, where she works as a certified life coach specializing in working with all weight-loss patients. She is a support group leader, patient advocate and a member of the OAC.

OAC

MEMBERSHIP



Building a Coalition of those Affected

The OAC is the **ONLY** non profit organization whose sole focus is helping those affected by obesity. The OAC is a great place to turn if you are looking for a way to get involved and give back to the cause of obesity.

There are a variety of ways that you can make a difference, but the first-step is to become an OAC Member. The great thing about OAC Membership is that you can be as involved as you would like. Simply being a member contributes to the cause of obesity.

Why YOU Should Become an OAC Member

Quite simply, because the voice of those affected needs to be built! The OAC not only provides valuable public education on obesity, but we also conduct a variety of advocacy efforts. With advocacy, our voice must be strong. And, membership is what gives the OAC its strong voice.



JOIN NOW

Complete the membership application now!
Or, Just Scan the Code to the left Using Your Barcode Scanner App on Your SmartPhone!
For more information, visit the OAC Web site at www.obesityaction.org.

Membership Categories and Benefits

The OAC wants YOU to be a part of what we do. No matter how you're impacted, having individuals join our efforts who believe in making a difference is essential. That's why the OAC offers various member categories, so you can get involved at your desired level.

Several valuable benefits also accompany your OAC membership. Each membership category offers something different. Here are some of the core benefits to membership:

- Official welcome letter and membership card
- Annual subscription to the OAC's magazine
- Subscription to the OAC's members-only monthly electronic newsletter
- Periodic member alerts informing you of issues that need action/attention
- Ability to lend your voice to the cause
- Representation through advocacy

Membership Application

Yes! I would like to join the OAC's efforts. I would like to join as a/an:

- Individual Member: \$20/year
- Professional Member: \$50/year
- Physician Member: \$150/year
- Institutional Member: \$500/year
- Chairman's Council: \$1,000 and up/year

Name: _____

Company: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____

Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Please indicate areas where you would like to serve the OAC:

- Serve on an OAC committee
- Help fundraise
- Advocacy
- Educational outreach

Payment Information

Enclosed is my check (payable to the OAC) for \$ _____.

Please charge my credit card for my membership fee:

- Discover®
- MasterCard®
- Visa®
- Amex®
- Please sign me up for auto-renewal so my membership will automatically renew each year (only for credit card transactions).

Credit Card Number: _____

Expiration Date: _____

Billing Zip Code: _____



Mail to: OAC
4511 North Himes Ave., Ste. 250
Tampa, FL 33614

Or Fax to: (813) 873-7838