

# Meal-Time Magic for Families



- ◆ **Make meals enjoyable and get everyone involved:** Involve all family members in meal planning, shopping, and preparation. When teens start driving, teach them shopping skills and responsibility by sending them to the store for with a short grocery list. Also, include everyone in thinking of ways to make meals more healthful. Let kids build pizzas or fill tacos with healthy toppings. Plan times to try new ethnic cuisines, such as Indian, Greek, or Latin. Regularly give each individual a turn to plan their favorite menu.
- ◆ **Turn off all distractions:** These include the **television**, radio, computer, video games, and phones.
- ◆ **Encourage positive conversation and avoid being critical:** Focus on good things that happened during the day and events your family members are looking forward to. A great question to ask is, "What are you thankful for today?" or " what is the best thing that happened to you today?" Being critical or discussing unpleasant topics causes stress.
- ◆ **Set a good example:** Children are much more likely to eat healthfully and establish good eating habits if they see you doing the same.
- ◆ **Be flexible to accommodate your family's schedule:** Change the time that you typically eat dinner so everyone can be present, or plan a "family lunch" on Sunday afternoon when everyone is home. Or, pack a healthy meal to take with you and eat together between your children's activities.

