



The National Center on
Addiction and Substance Abuse
at Columbia University

Family Day

A Day To Eat Dinner With Your Children



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Family Day
is celebrated
on the fourth
Monday in
September,
the 27th in 2004.

Family Day — A national effort to promote parental engagement as a simple, effective way to reduce youth substance abuse risk and raise healthier children.

A child who reaches age 21 without using drugs, smoking cigarettes or abusing alcohol is virtually certain never to do so.



MANY AMERICANS ARE MISSING SOMETHING FROM THEIR DAILY ROUTINES...

...FAMILY DINNERS

Hectic work schedules, after-school activities and time with school friends often interfere with dinnertime. Yet research by The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) at Columbia University consistently finds that the more often children eat dinner with their families, the less likely they are to smoke, drink or use illegal drugs.

Created by CASA* in 2001, *Family Day - A Day to Eat Dinner with Your Children* is a national effort to promote family dinners as an effective way to reduce substance abuse among children and teens. *Family Day* promotes regular family activities to encourage parent-child communication, reminds us all of the value of parental engagement and encourages parents to make family dinners a regular feature of their lives. *Family Day* is celebrated on the *fourth Monday in September, the 27th in 2004*.

Family Day is not just for families. It is a day for all to celebrate, including businesses, unions, religious organizations and community groups. The symbolic act of regular family meals should be promoted and celebrated inside and outside the home.

Begin making family dinners a regular feature of your daily routine!

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FAMILY DINNERS – MORE THAN JUST GOOD NUTRITION

Regular family meals offer much more than you think. Regardless of a teen's gender, family structure or family socioeconomic level, teens who eat dinner with their families often are more likely to:

- Do well in school
- Be emotionally content
- Have positive peer relationships and healthier eating habits
- Be at lower risk for thoughts of suicide
- Have lower levels of stress
- Be bored less often

Conversely, teens who eat dinner with their parents twice a week or less are:

- Four times more likely to smoke cigarettes
- Three times more likely to smoke marijuana
- Nearly twice as likely to drink
- More likely to have sex at a younger age and get into fights

...FURTHER PROOF ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF FAMILY DINNERS

CASA research finds that teens who have dinner with their families two nights a week or less are at double the risk of substance abuse as teens who have frequent family dinners.



ENTERING HIGH SCHOOL – A CRUCIAL TIME FOR TEENS

Frequent family dinners become more crucial as teens move from middle school to high school. CASA research shows that teens are at greater risk of substance abuse during these years. It is crucial that parents stay involved in their children's lives during that time. Dinner is one way to make this happen.

Please visit
our web site at
CASAFamilyDay.org
and pledge to
have dinner
with your family
on Family Day.

Parent Power is the most potent and underutilized tool in preventing children from using substances or engaging in risky behavior.

PARENTS HAVE POWER AND IT STARTS AT THE DINNER TABLE

Sharing a meal helps assist in parental engagement and communication. Regularly eating dinner as a family helps parents learn more about their children's lives and better understand the challenges that their children face. Children who regularly eat dinner with their families are also more likely to talk to their parents about their problems.

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TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL FAMILY MEALS

- Every Sunday, pick several nights during the upcoming week when the entire family can eat together. Make your best attempt to stick to the schedule.
- Encourage your children to create menu ideas and participate in meal preparation.
- During dinner, turn off the TV and the phone.
- Talk about what happened in everyone's day: school, work, friends or current events.
- Establish a routine to start and end each meal. Light candles, say grace or tell a story. After dinner play a board game or serve dessert to encourage the family to continue the conversation.
- Keep conversation positive and make sure everyone gets a chance to speak.
- Start the pattern of family dinners when children are young.

HOW TO CELEBRATE FAMILY DAY...

If you would like to promote *Family Day* outside your home, the following ideas may help you make this day an annual tradition.

...AS A COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION (Schools, YMCA, Boy/Girl Scout troop, etc.)

- Host a *Family Day* event, such as a lecture on substance abuse prevention or parenting, or a cooking class for families.
- Ask your local newspaper, TV or radio station to do a story about *Family Day* involving your school or organization.
- Enlist local businesses to participate. For example:
 - Grocery stores and restaurants can offer *Family Day* specials
 - Businesses can post signs encouraging families to eat dinner together on *Family Day*
- Ask your children's school to promote *Family Day* at after-school programs. Cancel activities that interfere with dinnertime on *Family Day* so children get home in time to eat with their families.
- Encourage local newspapers to conduct an essay-writing contest for children and publish the winning essay.

...AS A RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY

- Promote *Family Day* to your congregation in sermons and in your newsletters, community calendars and bulletins.
- Conduct a special *Family Day* service.
- Hold a *Family Day* event, such as a potluck dinner.

...AS A BUSINESS OR UNION OR NONPROFIT

- Promote *Family Day* in communications with your employees or members.
- Hold a *Family Day* event, such as a luncheon or weekend picnic.
- Accommodate employees' schedules so they can have dinner with their children on *Family Day*.
- Have employees participate in a contest for best *Family Day* events and celebrations.
- Promote your *Family Day* events through the local news media.

For further information, ideas, recipes for quick meals and materials your group or family can use to celebrate and promote *Family Day*, please visit www.CASAFamilyDay.org

TALKING TO YOUR CHILDREN

- Acknowledge that marijuana, alcohol and tobacco are substances that are out there and that many people use them. This is key to developing your credibility. In the case of nicotine and prescription drugs, explain that they are also “abuse-able” and should be treated the same as alcohol and illegal drugs.
- Communication is key. Start early and take time to explain things to your child in basic terms that are easily understandable. The ultimate goal is to make your child comfortable talking to you about “difficult” topics such as drugs, alcohol and smoking.
- Listen carefully to your child. Educate yourself so you can answer his or her questions. As children get older, their questions get more difficult, so you need to be prepared. Listening carefully shows not only that you care, but also that you understand what they are saying.
- Recognize that your child will most certainly know someone who uses drugs, smokes or drinks. They may also have the opportunity to use these substances themselves.
- Peer pressure may play a pivotal role in a child’s decision to use drugs, drink or smoke. However, encourage your child to be their own person and make their own decisions.
 - Tell your child the truth—that drugs, alcohol and tobacco may make them feel good for a while (by



activating brain chemicals). Unfortunately, that feeling is brief and no one can know the true potency or lifetime effects of these substances.

- Try to impress on your child the long-term consequences drinking, smoking or using drugs may have on something they enjoy doing, such as sports, math or writing. If they are not interested in school or sports, try to find something he/she can relate to where learning or skilled movements are involved.
- Point out that adolescents are in a period of life during which they need their brains to operate at full efficiency. These substances can impair brain function.
- Make the point that repeated “chemical activation” will eventually cause people to crave that chemical and want to keep using it even if it hurts them.
- Explain that these substances may dull a painful part of their lives for a brief period, but it will never change or help the underlying situation.
- Write a family “contract” established to make your opinions on drug use, drinking and smoking clear. Be consistent with family rules.
- Spend time with your children. Read to them. Eat dinner with them—you are simply going to know each other better. Kids from hands-on families are at lower risk for smoking, drinking or using illegal drugs.
- Talk with your children whenever possible and be open and truthful when answering their questions about drugs, alcohol or tobacco.
- Be a model of healthy behavior for your child.

(Adapted from “*Just Say Know: Talking With Your Kids About Drugs And Alcohol*,” Cynthia Kuhn, Ph.D, Scott Schwartzwelder, Ph.D, and Wilke Wilson, Ph.D.; W.W. Norton & Company: New York, 2002)

FAMILY DAY PROCLAMATIONS

Since its inception in 2001, the President, governors of 35 states and more than 200 cities and counties have issued *Family Day* proclamations.

Former First Lady Barbara Bush and actress Jamie Lee Curtis are featured in *Family Day* television and radio public service spots.

Numerous organizations have endorsed and promoted Family Day including:

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INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTORS:

Pat and John Rosenwald

QUESTIONS ABOUT WHAT YOU CAN DO ON FAMILY DAY?

**Visit www.CASAFamilyDay.org
or email familyday@casacolumbia.org**

The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) at Columbia University is the only national organization that brings together under one roof all the professional disciplines needed to study and combat all types of substance abuse in all sectors of society.

CASA's missions are to:

- Inform Americans of the economic and social costs of substance abuse and its impact on their lives
- Assess what works in prevention, treatment and law enforcement
- Encourage every individual and institution to take responsibility to combat substance abuse and addiction
- Provide those on the front lines with the tools they need to succeed
- Remove the stigma of substance abuse and replace shame and despair with hope

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