

# PRODUCE PRESS

NEWSLETTER • WINTER 2024

## SPOTLIGHT: MEALTIME FOCUS



Mealtime with children can be a chaotic time of day, especially for busy parents. It can be difficult to get children to sit still and eat. With many distractions, focus during family mealtime becomes even more of a challenge. Parents often resort to allowing screen time during a meal to help make mealtimes more manageable. While using screens during mealtimes may seem harmless, there are downsides. When screens are involved, an opportunity for connection is lost and many of the benefits of eating together as a family are lost.

Avoiding screens during mealtime offers an opportunity for family connection that benefits both children and adults. Studies show that children who have regular family meals each week tend to get better grades and have higher literacy rates. It also helps to improve social skills, promote emotional wellbeing, and decrease behavioral issues. It's important for adults and older siblings to set a good example and limit their own screen time during meals. Parents should set screen time expectations while eating together to keep mealtime pleasant and allow for family connection.

## TABLE TALK



### Tips to Limit Screens and Other Distractions During Mealtime:

Have a designated meal area (like a table) that is free of clutter, toys and potential distractions. Set clear boundaries for your children with simple phrases like "no toys at the table" to help them remember your expectations.

Adults should agree on screen time limits during meals and set a good example by also avoiding screens and other distractions during this time.

Consider starting small. Make one meal a day distraction-free. Then tackle the rest of the meals down the line.

Mentally prepare for tantrums that may happen when eliminating mealtime distractions. Changes in routine can be difficult for children. Be prepared to stay calm and enforce your mealtime expectations. Try to keep conversation light without threats.

Eat with your child and, if possible, eat the same meal as your child. Talk about the foods, colors, shapes and tastes. Tell short stories or simple jokes to engage with your child during this time.

When possible, let kids help with meal preparation. Let them wash vegetables, rip up the salad leaves, set the table, or count strawberries. Give them any kind of simple job to help them feel included in mealtime preparation.

### Child-Related Nutrition

If you would like more help with child-related nutrition, reach out to a dietitian from the Marion County Public Health Department:

**East side:** 317-221-7403

**Northwest side:** 317-221-7512

**South side:** 317-221-5707

## IN THE KITCHEN



### BUNNY DIP

#### Ingredients:

- 1 cup carrots, grated (or matchstick)
- 1 cup spinach
- 4 oz cottage cheese or cream cheese
- 2 teaspoon minced garlic

**Optional spices:** dill, parsley, onion, hot sauce

#### Directions:

1. Add all ingredients to blender or food processor and blend until smooth.
2. Enjoy dipping crackers or fresh veggies in this dip or using it as a spread on sandwiches and wraps.



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