

## Meal Times

Meal times are a great time for the family to get together and discuss the plans and outcomes of their day. It is recommended that we eat 3 meals and 2 snacks a day. By eating appropriate snacks we can keep hunger at bay and eat the right amounts of food each day.

### Breakfast

Breakfast is a very important meal time. The word actually means to break the overnight fast from the last meal of the previous day to the first meal of the next. In young people, breakfast can help with memory and good concentration in school as well as adding energy to the body to get through the morning until lunch time.

Research tells us that around 1 in 3 children aged 5 – 16 will leave the house on a morning for school without breakfast. This can lead to longer periods without food which can create higher levels of hunger sensations which can then lead to overeating. Skipping breakfast can also disrupt attention levels at school and can also lead to lethargy throughout the day.

### Lunch

School lunches or packed lunch, lunch is essential to help your body function throughout the afternoon. Lunches should consist of nutritional goodness and balance in what our body needs to function effectively. A sandwich with brown bread can add a great shot of much needed fibre to our bodies. Lean meats and vegetables inside along with yogurts and fruit can ensure we get the right foods to help our bodies work better.

Treats in meals such as crisps, cakes and high calorie chocolate bars are considered empty calories. This means these foods lack any nutritional value and therefore should be eaten little and less often.

### Evening meal

There are multiple positives to your evening meal. Eating in the late afternoon or early evening often means you are eating for the last time for 10 – 16 hours until you wake for breakfast. This is great time to charge your body and refuel with healthy goodness before you sleep. Maintaining a healthy balance at your evening meal helps your body recover through the night and sets you up nicely for the following day.

Research also tells us that eating a meal at the table as a family increases wellbeing in young people and is a great opportunity to catch up and discuss the day's events. This helps young people to become more socially competent and increase the family connection.