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MontGuide: Family Mealtime

Family Mealtime: The benefits to sharing meals

MontGuide: Family Mealtime; by Sandra J. Bailey, Ph.D., CFLE, MSU Extension Family and Human Development Specialist; Lynn Paul, Ed.D., R.D., MSU Extension Foods and Nutrition Specialist; and Phyllis Dennee, M.S., CFCs, MSU Extension Nutrition Education Specialist

Families today come in varying degrees of arrangements: two-parent, single parent, step-families, grandparents raising grandchildren and cohabitating parents with children. Schedules within families differ, thereby creating difficulty coordinating family mealtimes. Family mealtimes can occur at any meal during the day – breakfast, lunch, dinner or even dessert! Eating together as a family encourages communication, closeness and better nutrition and healthy eating behaviors.

A time to be together

Family mealtimes can promote family closeness, a sense of belonging to a special group, sharing and the ability to assert individuality. Mealtimes spent together can also be a way to slow down life for a short period of time and share with each other.

Learning about heritage

Family mealtimes can act as a stage for teaching and explaining to children the importance of family patterns or rituals. This allows an understanding of the uniqueness of each family heritage and the values based on each ethnic and cultural background. Also, by developing family traditions, family members can feel as if they belong to a special group. Traditions don't have to be elaborate; they just have to require participation. Start developing some today!

Modeling good habits

Family mealtimes are a great platform for demonstrating and teaching good habits. Good listening skills, communication skills, social manners, food choices and eating habits are all learned from the child's primary caregiver. Striving to practice good habits and patterns not only benefit the caregiver, but also, the child.

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Tips for incorporating all family members

Start by spending a half hour planning the upcoming week's meals. Include children in the planning and decision-making process. This allows them to feel as if they are recognized and what they have to say is important and respected. Next, try using convenience foods in some of the steps to reduce preparation time and maximize sharing time.

Tips for making everyone happy:

- Compare schedules and plan every week to spend one meal or snack with each other. Choose a meal that is quick and fun: have breakfast burritos or sandwiches, milk and fruit for dinner.
- Choose a made-ahead meal: for example, in the morning put a beef roast with vegetables in the crock-pot.
- Cook once: make enough to freeze for another meal.
- Have meals that are tasty and fun for everyone: to promote individual tastes and choices, set up a "potato bar" with a variety of toppings.

Remember, for a free single copy of any MontGuide, contact an MSU Extension Service near you. Or visit us online to download MontGuides free of charge at <http://extn.msu.montana.edu/publications.asp>

Kids + School = Flu Season

Kids are back in school, and with more time spent indoors in a contained area, chances of contracting the seasonal flu increase. The flu, also known as influenza, is a highly contagious respiratory illness caused by the influenza viruses. In the United States, on average, 5% to 20% of the population gets the flu. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), flu season in the northern hemisphere runs from about November to May. The average peak month during which flu season is highest is around February. People who become infected with the flu generally recover anywhere from a few days to two weeks. Certain populations that are at a higher risk of complications from the flu include those ages 50 years and older, very young children, those with chronic medical conditions, pregnant women, people who live in long-term care facilities and those who live or care for people at high risk. Recommendations for these populations include a vaccination; however, contact your local health care provider or health department for potential risks and indications for receiving a vaccination.

Signs/Symptoms:

Symptoms generally occur one to four days after being infected. The flu can be spread for another three to four days after symptoms appear.

- Fever
- Headache
- Dry cough
- Sore throat
- Muscle aches
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Nausea, vomiting and diarrhea, which is more common in children than adults



Washing your hands is the best way to prevent contracting the flu.

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Prevention:

- Wash, wash, wash your hands—sing a full verse of “Happy Birthday” while you wash your hands.
- Cover your mouth and nose when you cough to prevent the spreading of contagious droplets—don’t forget to wash your hands afterwards!
- Avoid touching your nose, mouth and eyes with your hands—this prevents the spread of germs.
- Practice good health habits—get plenty of sleep, drink plenty of water, eat nutritious food and incorporate daily physical activity.
- Please, stay at home when you are sick.

Call your local health department or visit this link for a listing of local health departments: <http://www.dphhs.mt.gov/PHSD/agencies/ph-agencies/local-ph-agencies.pdf>. Or, visit AARP’s website at <http://www.lungusa.org/site/pp.aspx?c=aqKGLXOAIH&b=1015035> to find a flu shot closest to you.

Weatherizing Your Home

Weatherization is the protection of a building from the harsh, outside elements like sunlight, precipitation and wind, by reducing energy consumption and improving energy efficiency. A home’s cracks and holes can be easily noticed during the harsh winters in Montana. However, by replacing or fixing problem areas within your house, savings during both the winter and summer months will result. Common problem areas within houses include:

- Gaps and cracks around fireplace flues and vents, particularly dryer vents.
- Holes and leaks around pipes entering the building allowing air to flow in.
- The space between the light outlet and wall.
- Cracks around door frames and thresholds.
- Windows not tightly sealed.
- Old and dirty furnace and air-conditioner air filters.

**Doing it yourself:**

- Close up gaps and cracks around fireplace flues and dryer vents with heat-resistant caulking and/or metal collar plates.
- Install a water heater blanket and think about insulating the first five feet of the hot and cold water pipes.
- Seal light outlets with a foam gasket.
- Fill in any holes or spaces with insulation; then seal with caulking or a wall patch.
- Install or replace weather-stripping on doors and windows.
- Replace furnace and air-conditioner filters for improved safety and better efficiency.

For a comprehensive do-it-yourself guide to energy saving, home sealing techniques, a 44-page e-booklet has been produced by the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA). BPA serves the Pacific Northwest with affordable and reliable energy, without compromising fish and wildlife habitat. http://www.bpa.gov/energy/n/energy_Tips/weatherization/ (Continued on page 4)

Also, the state of Montana through the Department of Public Health and Human Services offers a Weatherization Program for low-income individuals. Homes are assessed by an energy auditor for weatherization needs and materials. Eligibility is based on income and assets. For more information please visit <http://www.dphhs.mt.gov/programsservices/energyassistance/index.shtml>.

View the MSU Extension publications by visiting, <http://extn.msu.montana.edu/publications.asp> or call 994-3273.

The importance of exercise as we age

As we age, we encounter a number of health problems and ailments. These can be attributed to the natural physiological changes that occur with age. We feel stiffness in our joints and muscles, and it's harder to lift our arms above our heads or carry groceries. The good news is that daily physical activity can help improve all of these issues and more! Remember, physical activity can provide the following:

- Improved mood
- Lower risk of coronary heart disease, diabetes, hypertension and obesity
- Improved quality of life and functioning
- Lower overall mortality rate

And in children:

- Increased self-confidence
- Improved psychological well-being and self-esteem



To gain the above benefits, you don't have to be breaking a sweat and your back to get exercise. You can achieve significant health benefits with just moderate exercise. All you have to do is spend at least 30 minutes a day exercising on most or all days of the week. So, grab your little buddy and get out there! Here are a few ideas to get you revved and ready for the fall.

- Rake the beautiful fall leaves into piles.
- Go for a walk around the neighborhood.
- Get the jump rope out and start jumping!
- Get the chalk out and play a game of hopscotch.
- When the snow flies, make snow angels.

Grandparents' resources to parenting

[A Grandparents Book: Answers to a Grandchild's Questions](#) - Milton Kamen

[Money Doesn't Grow on Trees: A Parent's Guide to Raising Financially Responsible Children](#) - Neale S. Godfrey, Carolina Edwards, and Tad Richards

[Grandparents as Parents: A Survival Guide for Raising a Second Family](#) - Sylvie de Toledo and Deborah Edler Brown

[Contemporary Grandparenting](#) - Arthur Kornhaber

[Grandparent Power!: How to Strengthen the Vital Connection Among Grandparents, Parents, and Children](#) - Arthur Kornhaber

[Working with Custodial Grandparents](#) - Bert Hayslip and Julie Hicks Patrick



GRG Newsletter Highlight: Marsha Goetting

Professor of Economics and Montana State Extension Family Finance Specialist, Marsha Goetting, has developed an easy-to-use website dealing with property distributions of a loved one who has not left a will.

www.montana.edu/dyingwithoutawill/ will answer questions about what to do when death occurs without a written will, according to Montana law.

Grandparent Contributions:

If you would like to highlight something special your Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Support Group is doing please send an article or information to grg@montana.edu for possible submission in the newsletter. We would also love to receive photos and poetry. Please remember if you send in photos you need permission from all the people who are in them. You can request a photo release form from the GRG project by e-mailing us at grg@montana.edu or call 406-994-3395.

October and November Observances

October :

Adopt-a-Shelter Dog Month

Breast Cancer Awareness Month

Domestic Violence Awareness Month

Halloween (Oct 31)

National Dessert Month



November :

National American Indian Heritage Month

American Diabetes Month

National AIDS Awareness Month

National Lung Cancer Awareness Month

America Recycles Day (15th)

Thanksgiving Day (22nd)

Veterans Day (11th)

Nov 12th18th is World Kindness Week

Daylight Saving Time Change—November 4th (turn your clocks back one hour)

Project Coordinator Introduction

Greetings!

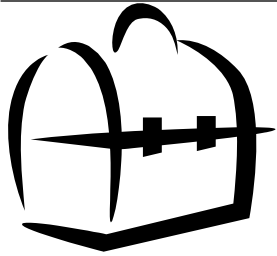
Hi, my name is Hannah Cowgill. I am a graduate student working in the Nutrition and Exercise Science program and currently the 2007-2008 project coordinator for the Grandparents Raising Grandchildren project. I love to ski, ride my bike and be with my wonderful friends and family. I feel very honored and am very excited to be working with Dr. Sandy Bailey. Please, feel free to contact me with any questions, comments or suggestions at grg@montana.edu or 406.994.3395. Also, we are always looking for motivational, heartwarming and humorous stories or experiences from grandparents. If you would like to share a story, please send it our way.

Thank you and have a great fall. See you in the winter.

Hannah



10 Tips for Brown Bagging it With Your Grandchild



Bringing your own lunch to school is quick, convenient and inexpensive. Involving children in this process allows them to feel as if they can influence some of what goes on around them, and helps them build new skills and confidence. Try these suggestions with your grandchild:

1. Make sandwiches out of cookie cutter shapes.
2. Decorate the lunch bag or lunchbox with stickers or stamps.
3. Sneak in a little note, fun article or joke-of-the-day into the lunch box.
4. Make different shapes out of everyday fruits and veggies. For example, cut cucumbers or carrots into squares, or cube apples.
5. Make your own trail mix and let the kids be involved. Use goldfish, raisins, pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds, chocolate chips, M&Ms and/or pretzels.
6. Use different kinds of bread to make sandwiches.
7. Use frozen juice boxes or small 100% juice containers to keep food cold until lunch.
8. Make one day of the week special by putting in something different like dried nectarines or peaches, or a favorite cookie.
9. Put hand sanitizer or baby wipes in to clean messy hands before and after eating lunch.
10. Don't forget to wash the lunchbox after every use to prevent mold and germs.

Grandparent-Teacher Conference Tips

Grandparent-teacher conferences can be stressful for everyone involved. Below are some helpful tips for easing the stress.

Prepare ahead of time before the conference:

1. Know how your child is doing by looking over their tests and assignments.
2. Ask your child questions like, "What is your favorite subject?" "What is your least favorite school activity?" and "Who are your friends?"
3. Write down your questions so that you can cover all the concerns that are important to you.
4. List your child's strengths and don't be afraid to voice them to the teacher.



During the conference:

1. Be on time.
2. Be open to suggestions and ideas. Ask the teacher how they think you can best support your grandchild.
3. Ask about your child's social interactions during school.
4. Offer suggestions and insights about your child.
5. Take notes.

Grandparent Support Groups Across Montana

Billings

Bernie Mason
P.O. Box 35021
Billings, MT 59107
256-2828

Bozeman

Scott Trzinski
316 Herrick Hall
Bozeman, MT 59715
994-3395
grg@montana.edu

Browning

Carrie Jackson
Eagle Shield Center
P.O. Box 76
Browning, MT 59417
338-7257

Butte

Butte 4C's
Terri Bolstad
101 E. Broadway
Butte, MT 59701
723-4019
800-794-4061

Colstrip

Jennifer Anderson
P.O. Box 65
Forsyth, MT 59327
346-7320

Dillon

723-4019
800-794-4061

Glendive

Pete Bruno
Parents Resource Center
200 S. Kendrick
Glendive, MT 59330
377-7515

Great Falls

Jona McNamee
Cascade County Extension
454-6980

Helena

Jeanette B. Mattfeldt
562 Broadway
Helena, MT 59601
442-8207

Lewistown

Denise Seilstadt
712 W. Main
Lewistown, MT 59457
535-3919

Kalispell

Melody Domphe
The Nurturing Center, Inc.
146 3rd Ave. W.
Kalispell, MT 59901
756-1414

Missoula

Cassidy Aafedt`
Families First
721-7690

Kathy Revello, MSU Extension
Missoula County Agent
258-4206

Poplar and Wolf Point

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MSU Extension
Culbertson, MT 59218
787-5312

Ravalli County

Brenda Fisher
Family Resource Specialist
108 Pinckney
Hamilton, MT 59840
363-1961 ext:107

Rocky Boy Reservation/ Box Elder

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395-4875

Rocky Boy Reservation/ Agency

Evelyn Gopher
395-4875

Townsend

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Jerri Paulk 266-4249

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Happiness is when what you think, what you say, and what you do are in harmony

-Mahatma Gandhi