[IMAGE]

More Time = Healthier Eating?

By Editorial Staff

Ahh, mealtime – so anticipated by children everywhere, and yet so often here and gone in a flash. Kids of all ages rush to the table in a cloud of excitement, devour their food (some or all of it) and then leave just as quickly - often with the less-healthy items gone and the healthier items remaining. Then there's the second scenario: Kids linger at the table, picking at their food or talking, but never getting to the healthy items, either by design or ... well, usually by design, let's face it.

School lunch behaviors are often the same, although at school, there are even more distractions: classmates to talk to, lunch activities to pursue (dodge ball, etc.), tests to prep for (that we're prepped for the night before). The result, whether at home or at school, is often the same: nutrition takes a big back seat.

How can we change the state of affairs? It may be a simple solution: extending eating time. Research suggests that in school, for example, doubling seated lunch time from 10 minutes to 20 minutes resulted in higher consumption of fruits and vegetables. Interestingly, entree and beverage consumption were not impacted by the added time.

If we apply these findings, published in *JAMA Network Open*, to the home setting, parents may realize the same success with getting their children to eat healthier foods such as fruits and veggies. It might not be the foods themselves that are turning your kids away; the time they spend at the table could be the culprit. Your home solution: mandate at least 20 minutes at the kitchen table for every meal and see what happens.

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