

Family Meal Routines are Helpful for Health and Well-Being During COVID-19

The C-EAT (COVID-19 Eating and Activity Over Time) survey was conducted between April-October 2020 among a diverse sample of young adults in the longitudinal EAT study. The present study examined changes in family meal frequency, eating behaviors, and emotional well-being.



Study Participants

This study included 585 young adults who lived with at least one other household member during the COVID-19 pandemic.

56% lived with their parents

29% lived with their sibling(s)

4% lived with roommate(s)/friend(s)

39% lived with their significant other

21% lived with their child(ren)

2% lived with other family (extended family, in-laws)

Findings

The number of family meals increased during COVID-19.

Families were engaging in an average of **4.6 family meals** per week during COVID-19.

89% reported engaging in **1 or more family meals** per week during the pandemic.



28% reported **7 or more family meals** per week during the pandemic.

Family meals were associated with home food availability, dietary intake, and emotional well-being.

Participants who reported **more family meals** per week were more likely to:

- have more healthful food available and accessible in the home (i.e., fruits and vegetables)
- eat more fruits and vegetables per day
- report less depressive symptoms and stress, and better perceived ability to manage stress





Conclusions



Engaging in family meal routines may promote better dietary and emotional well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic, and potentially other public health crises.

Implications

1

Public health campaigns may consider including messages regarding the importance of carrying out family meal routines during public health crises, when schedules and routines have been disrupted.

2

Policy makers may consider partnering with community organizations such as food pantries to create and pass legislation that would provide resources (e.g., SNAP, meal kits) for families to engage in family meals during public health crises.

3

Health care providers could provide guidance and encourage young adults in all stages of life to engage in family meals with other household members as one way of supporting their nutritional health and emotional well-being during public health crises, as well as when normal daily routines resume.

Authors and Contact Information

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