

Drink To Your Health

Your Teens' And Kids' Beverage Choices May Impact Weight And Quality Of The Diet

(NAPSA)—Eating dinner together as a family can have beneficial effects on the health and well being of the whole family. But when you sit down to the table, don't just focus on what's on your family's plate—what is in their glass matters, too.

With the percentage of overweight American children and teens having tripled in the last two decades, parents may be surprised to learn that what's filling their glasses might be related to how much they weigh and the overall quality of their diets. A recent analysis of beverage consumption called *What America Drinks* found that teens drank two to three times the amount of sweetened beverages as they did milk.

"This is concerning not only for what those sweetened beverages contain, but what they are pushing out of the diet," said registered dietitian and mom Jodie Shield.

The report found that teen girls who consumed higher amounts of milk and lower amounts of nutrient-poor sweetened beverages tended to weigh less than their peers who consumed higher amounts of sweetened beverages and low amounts of milk—regardless of total calorie intake. Additionally, milk was the top beverage source for calcium, vitamin A, protein, potassium, phosphorus, zinc and magnesium for kids and teenagers.

"These findings stress the importance of helping your children choose nutritious beverages," said Shield. "Start by helping



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them make healthy choices at mealtime, since research reveals eating together can promote positive habits for kids."

Importance of Family Dinner

Research shows that families who eat together may be less likely to have kids who are overweight. Eating family meals promotes positive nutrition habits for kids, and the more often a family eats together, the more likely their kids will choose calcium-rich drinks such as milk instead of nutrient-void sodas.

"By swapping out the soda for fat free or lowfat milk at the dinner table, moms and dads can feel good about boosting their family's

intake of nine essential nutrients, including calcium, protein and potassium," said Dr. Frank Greer, Chair of the Nutrition Committee for the American Academy of Pediatrics.

In fact, by swapping out regular soda for milk at mealtime boosts your calcium by 260 percent, vitamin D by 625 percent and potassium and magnesium by around 30 percent.

Role Modeling

By making small changes in their family's beverage choices, parents can help keep their family healthy and at a healthy weight.

"If we as adults don't practice what we preach, we end up sending our children mixed messages," said Shield. "When you drink a glass of milk instead of soda, they will catch on."

Recent studies show that moms' own food choices may be more influential than any other attempt to control their daughters' food intake. In fact, a mother's decision to drink milk more frequently and to eat more fruits, vegetables and whole grains is likely to influence her daughter's choices.

Plus, drinking the recommended three servings of lowfat or fat free milk every day is an important part of a healthy diet for mom and her kids, and research suggests that lowfat and fat free milk may also contribute to maintaining a healthy weight.

Log on to www.thinkaboutyourdrink.com for tips and tools to help your family make better beverage choices.