

Family Dinners Boost Teen Mental Health

Posted By [Cynthia Lee-McGill](#) On March 27, 2013 @ 9:22 am In [Society & Culture](#) | [3 Comments](#) **MCGILL (CAN)** — Regular family dinners are good for teens, even those who say they can't talk to their parents easily, a new study finds.

“More frequent family dinners related to fewer emotional and behavioral problems, greater emotional well-being, more trusting and helpful behaviors towards others and higher life satisfaction,” says Frank Elgar, an associate professor in the McGill University Faculty of Medicine’s Department of Psychiatry. **Straight from the Source**

[Read the original study](#) ^[1]

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The study, conducted by Elgar and colleagues at Queen’s University, examined the relation between frequency of family dinners and positive and negative aspects of mental health.

The researchers used a national sample of 26,069 adolescents aged 11 to 15 years who participated in the 2010 Canadian Health Behavior in School-Aged Children study.

The researchers found the same positive effects of family mealtime on the mental health of the young subjects, regardless of gender, age, or family affluence.

“We were surprised to find such consistent effects on every outcome we studied,” says Elgar. “From having no dinners together to eating together 7 nights a week, each additional dinner related to significantly better mental health.”

During the study, the adolescents submitted data on the weekly frequency of family dinners, ease of parent-adolescent communication, and five dimensions of mental health, including internalizing and externalizing problems, emotional well-being, more helpful behaviors, and life satisfaction.

The authors suggest that family mealtimes are opportunities for open family interactions which present teaching opportunities for parents to shape coping and positive health behaviors such as good nutritional choices, as well as enable adolescents to express concerns and feel valued, all elements that are conducive to good mental health in adolescents.

The results of this research are published in the [Journal of Adolescent Health](#) ^[1]. The Canadian Health Behavior in School-Aged Children study was part of a World Health Organization collaboration of 43 countries and was funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada.

Source: [McGill University](#) ^[2]

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[1] Read the original study: [http://www.jahonline.org/article/S1054-139X\(12\)00317-5/abstract](http://www.jahonline.org/article/S1054-139X(12)00317-5/abstract)

[2] McGill University: <https://www.mcgill.ca/newsroom/channels/news/family-dinners-nourish-mental-health-adolescents-225489>