



Frequent Family Dinners May Protect Against Teen Drug Use

Wauwatosa School District

Teenagers who eat dinner with their families five times a week are significantly less at risk of alcohol, tobacco or other drug use compared to teens who sit down for family dinner fewer than three times weekly, according to the latest report from the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA*) at Columbia University.

The [Importance of Family Dinners](#) report found that youths who infrequently ate dinner with family members were twice as likely to use alcohol or marijuana and one-and-a-half times more likely to use alcohol. They also were more apt to expect to try using illicit drugs in the future, the survey found.

CASA reported that 59 percent of teens said they had family dinners at least five times weekly, and 62 percent of parents agreed. "The bad news in this year's survey is that work and other activities keep many families from getting to the table for frequent family dinners. But the good news is that most of these teens and parents would be willing to give up a weeknight activity to have dinner with their family," said Joseph A. Califano, Jr., CASA's founder and chairman.

Having distractions at the dinner table, such as talking or texting on the phone or playing video games or surfing the Internet, also correlated with an increased risk of youth alcohol, tobacco and other drug use.

"The magic of the family dinner comes not from the food on the plate but from who's at the table and what's happening there," said Elizabeth Planet, CASA's vice president and director of special projects. "The emotional and social benefits that come from family dinners are priceless. We know that teens who have frequent family dinners are likelier to get A's and B's in school and have excellent relationships with their parents. Having dinner as a family is one of the easiest ways to create routine opportunities for parental engagement and communication, two keys to raising drug-free children."

Researchers surveyed about 1,000 teens and about 450 parents for the study.

Wauwatosa School District

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Together Tosa United aims to:

Unite the Wauwatosa community in a cooperative effort to develop an environment free of problems stemming from the abuse of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs.

Generate a deeper understanding of the role of adults in the prevention of youth involvement with alcohol, tobacco and other drugs.

Unite attitude, policy, and message with regard to no tolerance of underage drinking, underage smoking and/or other drug use within our community.



*The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University is neither affiliated with, nor sponsored by, the National Court Appointed Special Advocate Association (also known as "CASA") or any of its member organizations, or any other organizations with the name of "CASA".