



Strengthening Oklahoma Families

Is takeout food safe during the COVID-19 pandemic?

For several months, Oklahomans have been hunkered down in their homes as a safety precaution during the COVID-19 pandemic. While this extra time at home has prompted some to spend more time in the kitchen trying out new recipes, others have opted for takeout, curbside delivery or home delivery for their meals.

What safety precautions should you be taking in order to ensure your personal safety?

Christine Walters, Oklahoma State University Extension maternal and child nutrition assistant specialist, said takeout meals are a great option for many people.

"Although the restrictions are being lifted around the state and many restaurants have reopened their doors, the dining in experience still may not be a great idea for everyone, especially those with underlying health concerns," Walters said. "However, there isn't any current research to suggest COVID-19 can be transmitted by food or food packaging, and there haven't been any reports of food transmission made to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Food and Drug Administration or the United States Department of Agriculture."

Takeout and curbside food delivery is still a great option for many Oklahomans, not only for those with a weakened immune system. It also helps support current recommendations for social distancing.

Walters did say that if food

were to become contaminated with COVID-19, stomach acid, which is very acidic, would inactivate the virus.

"Because COVID-19 is a respiratory virus, it isn't well-suited to infect the gastrointestinal system," she said.

To help alleviate chances of cross contamination, many restaurants have instituted no-touch options, which further minimizes the risks. Once the food goes into the oven, it is not touched again by anyone other than the consumer.

"However, to further cut down on risk, it's always best to wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with warm water and soap, or use hand sanitizer after handling food packaging from your takeout order," Walters said.

Consumers also can continue to take advantage of home food delivery services from their local grocery stores. This will help eliminate coming into contact with crowds of people.

"Personal safety is the key message and we simply want people to know they have options for food and groceries that will help keep them safe," Walters said.



Lincoln County Extension Office

Address

811 Manvel, Ste 2
Chandler, OK 74834

Phone

405-258-0560

Email

Jessica Riffin
jessica.riffin@okstate.edu

Website

oces.okstate.edu/lincoln

Social Media

Facebook: /
LincolnCountyOSUExtension
Blog: jessicaskitchentable.
wordpress.com

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Healthy Snacks to Help Kids Grow

Being home for summer means your kids are probably asking for snacks several times a day. You might even feel like your entire day consists of feeding your little people. Do not despair. There is a reason for So. Much. Snacking. With their small stomachs, children may not meet their nutritional needs with just three meals a day. You can help them get all the nutrients and food energy they need to learn, play, and grow by choosing snacks from the five food groups. Think of snack time as a mini-meal.

Here are some great tips for healthy snack times:

- Keep food group snacks handy. Keep raw, cut-up vegetables, fruit, milk, cheese, yogurt, bread, peanut butter, or hard-boiled eggs on hand and ready to eat.
- Time snacks carefully. Offer snacks two to three hours before meals. That way your child will be hungry for lunch or dinner. Try to offer meals and snacks at the same time every day.
- Snack when hungry: Offer snacks when kids are hungry, not to calm tears or reward behavior. Otherwise, you teach a pattern of emotional overeating. Parenting tip: Sometimes kids say they are hungry when they just want attention or are bored. Take a few minutes to talk or do something fun!

- Let snacks fill the gap. If your child misses or does not eat vegetables at lunch, offer carrot sticks as part of an afternoon snack.
- Keep snacks small. If your child is still hungry, he or she can ask for more. Let your child decide how much to eat.
- Think “fun” at snack time. Kids like colorful foods; foods that smell good; and ones that are crisp, creamy, and crunchy. Come up with funny names for foods they might be hesitant to eat. For example, try calling an egg omelet a UFO (unidentified flying object).
- Offer simple foods most often. Examples are fruits, vegetables, whole-grain crackers or cereal, yogurt, and cheese. Once in a while, it is okay to offer candy or cookies as a special treat.

Snack time is a great time to make sure your child gets the recommended five servings of fruits and vegetables. Fruits and vegetables are packed with the nutrients your child needs to learn, play, and grow.

Here are some examples of snacks that include fruits and vegetables and foods from the five food groups.

- Fruit juice pops: Freeze 100 percent fruit juice in small paper cups or ice cube trays. Before freezing insert a plastic spoon for the stick.
- Crunchy banana: Peel bananas. Roll them in peanut butter or yogurt, then crushed cereal. Freeze.
- Peanut butter logs: Fill celery with peanut butter. Thin peanut butter with milk or mashed banana for younger children.
- Milk shake-ups: Pour milk, 100 percent juice, and ice in a covered container. Shake!
- Bunny snacks: Clean carrots, celery, broccoli, bell pepper, and other favorite vegetables. Cut into bite-size pieces for snacking. Offer low-fat ranch dressing for dipping.



Sunscreen is a must year-round

Summer is officially here, and that means people will be spending more time in the great outdoors. To help ensure skin safety in the sun, it's a good idea to be vigilant with sunscreen. With so many types available, choices are difficult.

And what do those numbers really mean? Smart sun-lovers know that sunscreen will help protect them and their families from sunburn and reduce the odds of skin cancer. How they use such products – in conjunction with other protective measures – makes a big difference, said Gina Peek, Oklahoma State University Extension housing and consumer specialist.

“Not only can a sunburn be painful, it also causes early skin aging,” Peek said. “Sunscreen is an effective tool we have to help keep our skin protected as long as it is used properly. One application before leaving the house to spend hours in the sun simply won't cut it.”

Peek said research indicates sunscreen users overall still get sunburned frequently, which may be due to products not being used frequently enough, inadequate quantities, or applying and reapplying protection too late. Staying outdoors longer and not wearing protective clothing are key considerations as well, as is the time of day.

“The sun is stronger in the middle of the day compared to early morning and early evening hours. Your risk of sunburn is higher at mid-day,” she said. To help cut down the risk of exposure, a broadspectrum sunscreen with a sun protective value of at least 15 should be used.

The SPF value indicates the level of sunburn protection provided by the product; the larger the number, the stronger the shield.

It's also important to follow directions on the package for correct application and how often the sunscreen should be reapplied. Typically, sunscreen should be reapplied at least every two hours, and more often for those who are in and out of the water or sweating.

Peek said enough sunscreen should be used to cover a person's entire face and body. An average-size person needs at least one ounce of sunscreen to do the job, which is about the amount needed to fill a shot glass.

Retail shelves are stocked with many sunscreen forms, including lotions, creams, sticks, gels, butters and sprays, all of which may have different application directions. The words, “broad spectrum,” on a label refer to chemicals that provide the widest range of protection from types of ultraviolet (UV) radiation.

“Remember to apply sunscreen to all exposed skin, including ears, nose, lips, back of the neck, hands and the tops of your feet,” she said. “Also, use it along the hairline, as well as

Peek said people often have sunscreen leftover from the previous year. However, it is a good idea to check the label for an expiration date. Expired sunscreen should be thrown away because there is no assurance it is still a safe product to use.

In addition to using sunscreen appropriately, there are other sun-protective measures that can be taken. For example, wear lightweight, light-colored longsleeved shirts, pants, sunglasses and wide-brimmed hats to minimize sun exposure. Consumers may think long sleeves during the summer would be uncomfortably warm, but modern light-weight materials can be quite comfortable.

“Families will be spending a lot of time together this summer, whether in the backyard, riding bikes, hiking or a variety of other activities,” Peek said.

“Using sunscreen properly is just one way to help keep your family safe on all of their adventures.”



AT A TIME LIKE THIS, WHO NEEDS FAMILY DINNER?

Source: thefamilydinnerproject.org

“My daughter is just a different person right now. She used to be so active and bubbly. Now all she wants to do is curl up on the couch and watch Netflix. I can’t even get her to come eat dinner without a fight.”

“We used to love eating dinner together as a family. But my husband’s an ICU doctor. He’s living in our basement right now, and the kids haven’t seen him since March. It seems like there’s no energy around having dinner anymore... we don’t feel so much like a family with Daddy out of reach.”

“The news is just overwhelming...some days I just feel like crying. Then it comes time to try to get the kids away from their video games or their phones to help with dinner, and it’s like I don’t have it in me. I think they’re happy where they are. Why fight it? I don’t even know if it matters.”

Unfortunately, stories like these are pretty common these days. It does seem like 2020 has been serving up every challenge it can: a global pandemic, financial uncertainty, and political and social unrest have totally taken over our news cycle and the way we live our daily lives. While the impact of any one of these events varies from family to family, things are harder right now for many of us than we expected them to be. So it’s understandable that when it comes to basic daily routines — like dinnertime — some families are asking “does this even matter right now?”

Dr. Anne Fishel, co-founder of The Family Dinner Project, says: “I believe that we’ve never needed rituals more than we need them right now. I’m not talking about rituals as elaborate religious ceremonies. I’m talking about the quirky ways that you come together as a family, like over a meal.”

In other words: Yes, the little things — like gathering for dinner — do matter. Dinner may not cure COVID, change the world overnight or make kids (and adults) feel instantly better about the turmoil around them. But it can provide a sense of stability, safety and even fun.

If you’re feeling like mealtime is just another rut you can’t climb out of, the answer may be to change mealtime into something that’s less like your usual routine. Here are some ideas to help you shake up family meals this month:

- **Let Go of “Dinner.”** A lot of people are feeling run down by the end of the day right now. Even if you’re working from home, or are spending the day occupying kids, the idea of transitioning into an evening of cooking and serving and cleaning up might feel like too much. Any meal, not just dinner, can be a meaningful ritual — so why not try one of our family breakfast ideas? It might be easier to get everyone excited to eat together early in the day.
- **Change the Scenery.** Too many of us have spent months now staring at the same four walls. Try a family picnic in the backyard or at a socially-distanced park or scenic area. Spread out blankets in the living room, or build a pillow fort for a new mealtime setting. Try dinner and a movie, or even a family dinner pajama party complete with dinner in bed.
- **Serve Snacks.** There’s something about finger food that automatically feels more fun. So why not offer “snacks” instead of feeling the pressure to cook a full meal when you’re really out of steam? Set out plates and bowls

- of fruit, cheese, crackers, nuts and whatever else you’ve got on hand, and let the family graze. Make it more fun by pulling out some favorite games you can play while you snack!
- **Connect with Others.** Use screen time to your advantage by having a virtual dinner with friends or family. Get some ideas and step-by-step advice on planning your event from our virtual dinner party guide!
- **Use Dinner to Take Action.** If dinner feels trivial compared to everything going on around you, use it as a time to talk about social change. For example:
 - Allow phone use at the table so people can look up events and action campaigns related to causes your family cares about.
 - Think of hands-on activities you can all take part in, like making masks for your community, creating positive artwork to hang in your windows, or painting peace rocks to hide around your neighborhood.
 - Or commit to learning more about a specific problem together, and start a family dinner book club to read and discuss books that will help you in your learning.

Lots of people are feeling fatigued and discouraged right now. But one day, we hope families will be able to look back at this time and remember that the daily rituals — old and new — were what got them through the summer of 2020.

Chicken and Spinach Lasagna from Texas AgriLife Extension's Dinner Tonight

Serves 8

- 3 boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- 1/4 tsp black pepper
- 1/2 cup Parmesan cheese low sodium
- 1/3 cup onion chopped
- 8 oz sour cream, fat free
- 1 cup 1% Milk
- 10 oz frozen spinach, thawed and drained
- 2 10.75 oz cans cream of chicken soup reduced sodium
- 16 oz whole wheat pasta noodles parboiled
- 1 cup shredded mozzarella cheese, fat free

Preheat oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit; spray a 9x13 inch baking pan with cooking spray.

Poach chicken breasts in water until done. Drain and cut into bite size pieces and place in a large mixing bowl.

Add parmesan cheese, onion, sour cream, milk, spinach, pepper and cream of chicken soup to the chicken and mix well.

Place 3 parboiled noodles in bottom of the pan. Spoon 1/3 of the chicken mixture on top. Sprinkle with 1/3 of mozzarella cheese. Repeat layers.

Bake for 30 to 45 minutes or until mixture begins to bubble. Let rest 10 minutes before cutting.

Nutrition Facts	
8 servings per container	
Serving size	(297g)
Amount per serving	
Calories	400
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 6g	8%
Saturated Fat 2.5g	13%
<i>Trans Fat</i> 0g	
Cholesterol 50mg	17%
Sodium 460mg	20%
Total Carbohydrate 57g	21%
Dietary Fiber 1g	4%
Total Sugars 6g	
Includes 0g Added Sugars	0%
Protein 30g	
Vitamin D 0mcg	0%
Calcium 336mg	25%
Iron 3mg	15%
Potassium 775mg	15%
*The % Daily Value tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.	



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