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## DIET COLUMN

# New Study Reconfirms Links Between Diet and Childhood Obesity

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Reports from a study conducted at the **University of Granada** in Spain revealed two important correlations pertaining to **childhood obesity**: Children who eat meals at home prepared by their mother have a better nutritional outlook. And children with sedentary lifestyles are much likelier to have an unhealthy BMI.

Using standard measurement methods, researchers assessed the BMI of 718 children between the ages of 9 and 17 from various schools in Granada, and also determined the consumption frequency of specific foods and daily exercise habits. Their research showed that there is a noticeable relationship between sedentary leisure habits and high BMIs. And that it is "extremely important" for healthy habits to be promoted and encouraged within the family.

This only further confirms what experts have taught us all along: Daily exercise is crucial to overall health. Meals prepared at home are likelier to be made with healthier, fresher ingredients and served in the proper portions. And it's crucial that healthy habits be modeled in the home.



So how do we apply this research if we struggle in this area? Consider the following problem areas and tackle them head on.

**You don't have time.** We're all busy but we all inevitably have to make time to eat. **Meal planning** can play an important role in saving you time throughout the week. One helpful tip is mapping out meals on Sunday to prepare throughout the week so you're never left without a dinner plan.

**Your child doesn't like the taste of fruit and vegetables.** Find **one** vegetable or fruit that they like and start from there. Even if it's only apples at first, incorporate that into your child's meals and branch out to other produce like broccoli, carrots and potatoes. The more it's presented, the more likely they are to give it a try. Take heart! It's worth it for your child's health.

**You don't know the first thing about preparing healthy food.** Preparing healthy meals can be as simple as choosing one lean protein like chicken, one healthy starch like a small baked potato, and one healthy serving of fruit or vegetables like steamed broccoli.

Need more inspiration? **Check out these 5 easy recipes** you can prepare for your family this week that will encourage them toward healthy eating habits.

**Oven Fried Chicken Tenders** will be a hit with your kids. Serve them alongside fresh fruit or veggies for a complete and nutritious meal.

**Spaghetti Squash with Fresh Tomato and Basil Sauce** is a healthy spin on a classic with far less calories and fat than traditional spaghetti. Serve alongside whole grain baguette to round out the meal.

**Easy Whole Wheat Pizza Crust.** This easy recipe comes together in under an hour to save you time, and your family will have a blast picking their own healthy toppings!

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**Shrimp Tacos with Grilled Poblano and Avocado Salsa** from Eat Live Run is a great way to introduce seafood in an exciting new way.

**Thai Fried Quinoa** from Peas and Thank You may be a meatless meal but it still packs lots of protein! Try this dish in place of greasy take out and your family will thank you for it in the long run.

March 6th, 2012

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Dana runs, she bakes, and she writes, making her perfect for us! She holds a bachelor's degree in journalism from Wichita State University, has a self-taught proficiency for vegan and vegetarian cooking, and considers herself a lifelong learner of all-things health. She lives life to the fullest in Wichita, KS with her husband.

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