



## family dinners are diet winners

*With the increasing availability of takeaway and fast foods, approximately one-third of our food-dollar is now spent on such foods with fewer of us regularly eating sit-down family dinners. And it's impacting our health.*

New research has found that eating family dinner less often is linked with poorer quality diets in children and adolescents, while a greater frequency of family dinner is associated with better diets.

The study, published in the *Archives of Family Medicine*, examined the nutritional quality of diets of more than 16,000 children and adolescents aged 9-14 years. Not surprisingly, it found the proportion of children eating family dinner has decreased over the years and also decreases with age. Older children are less likely to have family dinner on a regular basis than younger children.

The good news is that children who ate a family dinner more often had diets which contained:

- ▲ more fruits and vegetables
- ▲ less fried food and soft drinks
- ▲ a lower glycaemic load (effect on blood sugar).

▲ less saturated and trans fats  
They also consumed substantially higher levels of several nutrients including fibre, calcium, folate, iron, vitamins B<sub>6</sub>, B<sub>12</sub>, C and E.

Eating a family dinner can certainly promote a more healthful eating pattern among children (and probably also in their adult parents) and it should be encouraged.

See Food Matters recipes (page 44) for some great ideas for family meals.



Creamy  
Cauliflower Soup



**nutrition  
education  
service**

For further information contact: Sanitarium Nutrition Education Service  
Locked Bag 7, Central Coast Mail Centre, NSW 2252 Phone (02) 4348 7777  
Private Bag 92127, Auckland, New Zealand Phone (09) 625 4299