

Column
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Family and Community Wellness
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Quality Family Time

Spending time together as a family is so important for building togetherness and communication skills. Some of us are thinking we have had enough “togetherness” during the last eight months?

I know several families have decided they are not traveling for the holiday weekend or it will be very small gatherings. It might be a good time to make some specific plans for some fun things to do with your family.

- Go for a walk, a bike ride or find some other form of exercise
- Plan meals for an entire week, make a grocery list, and then make the meals.
- If the weather allows, plan an outdoor family meal.
- Find a hobby the whole family can enjoy. It may be building a model or watching a video to learn a new skill.
- Play a board game that allows members to talk and share. Charades or a

Pictionary type game can have the entire family laughing until their belly hurts!

My favorite spot to have a family gathering is in the kitchen. As children master new skills, they are eager to help in the kitchen. Their interest can provide enjoyable time while teaching nutrition and health.

Remind everyone to wash their hands with soap and water for a full 20 seconds before and after handling food. Clean the cabinets and make sure all the utensils and bowls are also clean. This is a great time to teach about cleaning up after yourself!

Obviously younger children need to be supervised with hot pans and knives but this is a great teaching opportunity. Try these easy projects with your children:

- Make personal pizzas. Use a can of refrigerated biscuits. Roll the biscuits slightly to flatten them; spread with sauce and your favorite toppings, such as chopped ham, cheese or pineapple.
- Create a favorite smoothie. My favorite is strawberries, a small can of crushed pineapple and a banana. Add ice to make it a frosty, icy mixture.
- Provide pretzels, raisins, crackers and a favorite spread like peanut butter or hazelnut spread to see who can create the most amazing turkey.

Encouraging children to help in the kitchen can offer a lot of pluses. They will most likely be more likely to eat the foods they help to prepare and they will be more aware of how much work it is to prepare food and then clean up after the food is prepared.

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