



FAMILY MEAL STRATEGIES

Sharing mealtime as a family is a key ingredient for healthy, happy kids of all ages.



© WAVEBREAK MEDIA/THINKSTOCK

Chew on these tips for making meals together an experience to savor.

WITH LITTLE ONES:

Keep it simple. You can serve a healthy meal that isn't entirely made from scratch. Boil some frozen ravioli and serve it with healthy store-bought vegetables and a side of fruit, or buy an already cooked rotisserie chicken and serve it with veggies and whole-wheat rolls.

Share responsibilities. Ask your children to help with jobs that match their age. Choosing the fruit for a meal or setting the table with unbreakable dishes are two options.

Sit and stay. Avoid the urge to finish your meal quickly so that you can get going on other tasks. Kids get more out of a family meal if their parents sit down and eat with them rather than just being nearby.

WITH ADOLESCENTS:

Broaden your definition of family mealtimes. If your work schedule or your children's after-school activities make it hard to eat dinner together regularly, set aside time for a weekend breakfast or lunch instead.

Tune in to each other. Parents are often just as guilty as their kids of wanting to watch TV or use their cellphones during meals. Turning off your electronics will help create a calm setting that can lead to conversation, relaxation and laughter.

Create theme meals. Add an element of entertainment to your family meals with food themes. Eat stir-fry with chopsticks, or pull out some colorful streamers to decorate for a Mexican fiesta.

HealthQuicks

How much fluid does the average, healthy adult living in a temperate climate need each day? The **Institute of Medicine** offers some recommendations. For most men, drinking roughly 13 cups of beverages a day is a good guide. Most women should use 9 cups of beverages a day as a guide. If you are exercising, are in hot and humid environments, are ill, or are a woman who's pregnant or breast-feeding, you'll need more fluids.

You may escape motion sickness by planning ahead. If you're traveling, reserve seats where motion is felt least: By plane, ask for a seat over the front edge of a wing. Once aboard, direct the air vent flow to your face. By train, take a seat near the front and next to a window. Face forward. By automobile, drive or sit in the front passenger's seat.

When choosing your child's Halloween costume, opt for bright colors and flame-retardant materials. Make sure it's large enough for wearing warm clothes underneath, but not so large that it can cause your child to trip. If your child will be trick-or-treating outdoors after dark, attach reflective tape to the costume. Skip the masks and pointed props, such as wands, swords and knives. They can pose a safety hazard.



2
THINKING ABOUT HAVING A BABY?



3
MY CIRCLE OF HEALTH: STAYING ENGAGED AT WORK



4
HEALTHY YOU: STAY IN TOUCH WITH YOUR HEALTH CARE TEAM



6
STRESS VS. DEPRESSION



7
RECIPE: VEGGIE-LOADED PASTA



© MFMER

EXPERT INSIGHT

Thinking about having a baby?

By Jani R. Jensen, M.D., Reproductive Endocrinology and Infertility, Mayo Clinic
 Dr. Jensen is a consultant in the Department of Obstetrics & Gynecology at Mayo Clinic, Rochester, Minn., and an assistant professor of reproductive endocrinology and infertility at the Mayo Clinic College of Medicine.

You can boost your chances of having a healthy baby even before pregnancy.

Here are four steps women can take.

1. Get your health in the best possible shape before pregnancy. Ways to do this include:
 - Taking a prenatal vitamin with at least 800 micrograms of folic acid daily
 - Reaching and maintaining a healthy weight
 - Quitting smoking
 - Not using alcohol
 - Managing stress
2. Know when to ask for help. In general, women younger than 35 years old should try to conceive for 12 months before seeking a specialty evaluation. Women older than 35 should try to conceive for six months.
3. Know what isn't normal. If your periods are more than 35 days apart, you may have a medical condition that needs to be treated. Thyroid disease and polycystic ovary syndrome are two examples.
4. When you stop taking birth control pills, you should have a normal period – or pregnancy – within three months. If you stop using pills and don't have a period after three months, talk to your doctor.

Teeth and aging: What you can do now

Here are a few facts about what happens to your teeth as you get older.

Your teeth can become less sensitive to cavities and other problems. If you don't get regular dental care, you may have a serious problem that you don't know about until it's too late to save your tooth.

Your teeth tend to get darker with age.

Your gums may recede, exposing the surfaces of your teeth's roots. Your roots' surfaces are softer than the crowns of your teeth, so they're more at risk of decay.

Medications can dry out your mouth, which can raise your risk of decay and gum disease.

Fortunately, good dental habits can help you maintain healthy teeth. Protect your teeth for the future with this advice.

- Brush twice a day with fluoride toothpaste and a toothbrush with soft bristles. Use small, circular motions and short back-and-forth strokes.
- Floss or use an interdental cleaner to clean between your teeth every day.
- Get your fluoride. Check to see if there's [fluoride](#)  [SEE PAGE 8](#) in your community water supply. If your community doesn't add fluoride or you drink bottled water or well water, ask your dentist about other ways to get fluoride.
- Don't smoke. Smoking increases problems with gum disease, tooth decay and tooth loss.
- See your dentist regularly for complete dental checkups and cleanings.



© MEDICINE TODAY/GETTY

MAYO CLINIC
 EDITORIAL STAFF AND ADVISORS

MEDICAL DIRECTOR
 Philip T. Hagen, M.D.
 Preventive Medicine

MEDICAL EDITOR
 Brent A. Bauer, M.D.
 General Internal Medicine

ASSOCIATE MEDICAL EDITOR
 Matthew M. Clark, Ph.D., L.P.
 Psychiatry and Psychology

EDITORIAL DIRECTOR
 Paula M. Marlow Limbeck

MANAGING EDITOR
 Stephanie K. Vaughan

ART DIRECTION
 Paul E. Krause, Aimee L. Wood

DESIGN AND PRODUCTION
 Gunnar T. Soroos

EDITORIAL REVIEW BOARD

Sandra Bjerkness, R.D.
 CTSA Clinical Research Unit

Alina G. Bridges, D.O.
 Dermatology

David W. Claypool, M.D.
 Emergency Medicine

Michael A. Covalciuc, M.D.
 Preventive Medicine

Edward T. Creagan, M.D.
 Medical Oncology

Donald D. Hensrud, M.D.
 Preventive Medicine

Jeanne Graner Krochta, L.P.
 Employee Assistance Program

Debra I. Mucha, R.N., C.N.P.
 Community Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine

Ray W. Squires, Ph.D.
 Cardiovascular Health Clinic

Jacqueline M. Thielen, M.D.
 General Internal Medicine

Maria G. Valdes, M.D.
 Community Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine

Andrew I. Vaughn, M.D.
 Preventive Medicine

Beth A. Warren
 Mayo Clinic's Dan Abraham
 Healthy Living Center

EDITORIAL RESEARCH

Anthony J. Cook, Amanda K. Golden, Deirdre A. Herman, Erika A. Riggan

PROOFREADING

Miranda M. Attlesley, Donna L. Hanson, Julie M. Maas

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

Laura B. Long

Want access to the health experts at Mayo Clinic?

This newsletter provides it. Mayo Clinic's 3,700 physicians, scientists and researchers help develop and review articles in this publication. Our editorial board also reviews each article to ensure that we're offering accurate, action-oriented information.



How to be fully engaged in your job

According to a Gallup poll, nearly one-third of American workers are fully engaged in and enthusiastic about their jobs. What makes them feel this way, and what can you learn from them? Here are four of their strategies.

Play well with others. Doing your part to be kind to others at work can help lead to a supportive workplace culture. In turn, this can help you focus your energy on your work. Your employee assistance program or human resources department can help.

Get your sleep. People who are most engaged at work get good, regular sleep. Good sleep habits can also boost your overall well-being and productivity. Avoid eating and using nicotine, caffeine or alcohol close to bedtime. Try to go to sleep and wake up at the same time every day.

Hang on to your values while you respect others'. It's important to feel like you're working in an environment where you can be yourself and where you respect others. Your job will seem more meaningful, and you'll feel more appreciated when your values match up with the values at your workplace.

Have a life outside of the office. Detach and relax when you're off the clock, and do something you enjoy. You'll feel more energized and positive as you begin your workday, and you'll be more focused and productive throughout your day. Spending time with friends, engaging in a hobby and getting physical activity are all ways you can recharge.

MyStory

Richard Phelps: 'Always go and have fun'

Thirty years ago, Richard Phelps traveled 330 days of the year, working for a trucking auction company. He weighed 430 pounds.

Today, Richard is still in the trucking industry, but his work life has changed – and so has his weight. Today, he weighs 250 pounds.

Diet and physical activity helped Richard lose weight. He gets plenty of vegetables and fruit and doesn't eat a 54-ounce steak right before bed like he used to. He doesn't smoke or drink alcohol.

For physical activity, Richard worked up to a 4-mile walk by the Mississippi River near his home in Iowa. He then started walking to his mom's house, which added another 5 miles to his walking routine. His mom, then 94, lived alone. Richard walked to her house to bring her things she needed and help take care of her.

But something else also helped Richard improve his health: his work life.

When Richard weighed 430 pounds, he wasn't happy.

"It was a time when I forgot what I was looking for," Richard says.

Eventually, Richard started his own auction company. For the last 25 years since then, he's enjoyed going to work every day – both because of what he does and the people he works with, employees and customers alike.

"To be happy and do what you love to do is a gift," Richard says.

When asked for advice on improving work-life satisfaction, Richard says, "Never just go to work. Always go and have fun."

Richard understands that not all days will be good ones. But he says anyone can conquer bad days with the right techniques. For example, instead of flying off the handle when you're upset, try taking a walk or taking a break and focusing on something else, he says.

"The biggest key is to keep a positive attitude, and it will work out," Richard says.



"To be happy and do what you love to do is a gift."

— Richard Phelps



Have a personal health success story to share?

Email EmbodHealthnewsletter@mayo.edu or write to Mayo Clinic EmbodHealth newsletter, 200 First St. SW, Rochester, MN 55905. All correspondence becomes the property of Mayo Clinic, which reserves the right to edit material.

Stay connected with your health care team

An annual health exam has long been the way people stay connected with their doctors. Although it's important to keep in touch with your health care team, an annual office visit isn't the only option. Some research even suggests that an annual physical isn't needed for healthy adults.

Here are two other ways to stay in touch.

Email or website. Many doctors' offices offer secure messaging via email or website. You can often use these services to refill a prescription, ask brief, general medical questions and get help with minor medical problems. This is a growing trend that's being explored by health care providers.

E-messaging. E-messaging helps limit unnecessary office visits, saves time and money, and improves how well health care works. If your doctor doesn't offer e-messaging, ask if it's possible to send a brief email to your health care team when an office visit may not be needed.

Women's Health

Breast cancer risk: What tests do you need?

Mammograms are the most common test for [breast cancer](#)

 screening. **Mayo Clinic** and the **American Cancer Society** say women at an average risk of breast cancer should get a mammogram every year starting at age 40.

If you're a woman who has an increased risk of breast cancer, you may need more tests. Consider getting an MRI in addition to your mammogram each year if:

- You have a BRCA genetic mutation
- You have a close relative who is a BRCA carrier
- You had radiation to the chest between ages 10 and 30
- You have Li-Fraumeni syndrome, Cowden syndrome or Bannayan-Riley-Ruvalcaba syndrome or have close relatives with one of these conditions
- Your estimated lifetime risk of breast cancer is greater than 20 percent

At Mayo Clinic, patients meet with a genetic counselor before getting additional breast cancer tests.

Breast cancer: Should you get a genetic blood test?

The answer may be yes if your family history includes:

Many cases of breast cancer before age 50

A relative with ovarian cancer

A relative who has both breast and ovarian cancers

A relative with bilateral breast cancer

Ashkenazi Jewish ancestry, with a relative younger than 50 with breast or ovarian cancer

A male relative with breast cancer

A relative with a known BRCA genetic mutation

Breast cancer across many generations

QUICK QUIZ: TEST YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1 **EVERYONE AGREES THAT ALL HEALTHY ADULTS NEED ANNUAL PHYSICAL EXAMS.**

True False

2 **IT'S NOT IMPORTANT FOR YOU TO KEEP IN TOUCH WITH YOUR HEALTH CARE TEAM WHEN YOU'RE NOT SICK.**

True False

3 **SECURE E-MESSAGING WITH YOUR HEALTH CARE TEAM CAN:**

Save time Save money Improve health care All of the above

4 **ALL DOCTORS' OFFICES PROVIDE SECURE E-MESSAGING.**

True False



TAKE THE QUIZ, ENTER TO WIN!

ENTER FOR A CHANCE TO WIN ONE OF MAYO CLINIC'S AWARD-WINNING BOOKS!

Contact information will be used for the purposes of this contest only.

Name: _____

Phone number: _____

Email (optional): _____

MAIL Clip out your quiz and mail it to Stephanie Vaughan, *Mayo Clinic EmbodyHealth* newsletter, 200 First St. SW, Rochester, MN 55905.

OR EMAIL your answers and contact information to EmbodyHealthnewsletter@mayo.edu. Include "Healthy You drawing" in the subject line.

WINNERS Contest entries must be received by Nov. 15, 2013. One winner will be chosen to receive a Mayo Clinic book of the winner's choice. Winners will be notified by phone or by email if no phone number is given.


Congratulations to Josephine C. of Northbrook, Ill., the winner of the June Healthy You drawing!

Move more, reach your goals

Are you ready to make a change to improve your health? Would you like to stop smoking or lose weight? Research suggests that physical activity can help you reach your health goals.

Here are two examples of how it works.

QUITTING SMOKING

Aerobic exercise gave women who were trying to quit smoking more energy and helped them crave cigarettes less. In this and other studies, exercise and nicotine replacement therapy were both used. In another study, people who went through a standard quit-smoking program that included exercise were more than twice as likely to still be tobacco-free after 12 months.

WEIGHT LOSS

Physical activity can help with weight loss – and not just by burning calories. Some studies suggest that physical activity can boost your mood and your confidence in making choices that can help you reach your goal. It can also help you overcome barriers.

- ✓ **Make exercise part of your health behavior change plan.** Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderately intense activity each week, such as brisk walking.

STRENGTH TRAINING

do's and don'ts

Strength training is important for your overall everyday health and well-being. Get the most out of strength training with this safety advice.

DO

- Work up to an amount of weight that will tire your muscles after 12 to 15 repetitions. Most people can see significant results from just one set. As an exercise becomes easier, add more weight.
- Exercise all your major muscle groups: abs, legs, chest, back, shoulders and arms.
- Work toward strength training two or three times a week. Rest for one to three days between sessions.

DON'T

- Forget to warm up before strength training. Just five to 10 minutes of brisk walking or another aerobic activity makes for a good warm-up.
- Hold your breath when strength training. Breathe freely when you raise and lower the weight.
- Rush through your exercises. Perform each exercise in a slow, controlled manner.
- Lift too much weight when you first start strength training.

HOW TO SELECT AN EXERCISE VIDEO

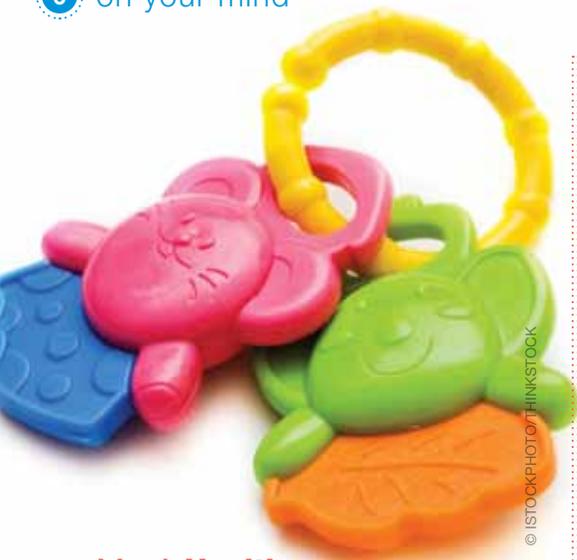
Exercise videos can be a great way to get physical activity in the convenience and privacy of your own home. Choose the exercise video that's right for you with these tips.

- **Does the video meet your fitness level?** Look to see if the video is described as beginner, intermediate or advanced.
- **Check credentials.** See if the instructor in the video has credentials from a trusted fitness organization, such as the **American College of Sports Medicine**. Other options include the **American Council on Exercise, Aerobics and Fitness Association of America, IDEA Health & Fitness Association, International Health, Racquet & Sportsclub Association**, and **Stott Pilates**.
- **Look for a well-rounded routine.** Choose a video that includes a warm-up and cool-down period. It should also include all four types of exercises: aerobics, strength training, flexibility and balance.
- **Avoid outrageous claims.** Avoid videos that claim, for example, that you can lose 20 pounds in two weeks or firm up in just five minutes a day.



Strength training shouldn't hurt. If it does, stop, talk with a personal trainer about your technique, and try it again in a few days or with less weight.





© ISTOCKPHOTO/THINKSTOCK

Men'sHealth

NEW DADS AND DEPRESSION

Doctors have long known that some moms can become depressed and anxious after having a baby. Can dads feel this way, too?

As many as 1 in 10 new dads has what's called paternal postpartum depression. Sleep deprivation, stress and all of the ways that having a baby changes your life are all causes. Most often, this happens three to six months after a baby is born. Men whose partners have postpartum depression are at higher risk of becoming depressed. Unfortunately, paternal postpartum depression often goes undiagnosed and untreated.

Left untreated, this depression can have a major effect on children. It can cause developmental delays, social problems and behavioral issues. It can also affect a man's relationship with his partner and his child. For example, depressed dads are more likely to spank their children and less likely to sing or read to them.

If you're a new dad, talk to your doctor or a licensed mental health professional if you:

- Feel depressed
- Are irritable
- Have trouble making decisions
- Are withdrawing from family and friends
- Have sudden bursts of anger

Everyone has a bad day sometimes. But if you're a new dad and over the last two weeks you have felt depressed and have lost interest in things you enjoy, you may have paternal postpartum depression.

STRESS VS. DEPRESSION

Stress and depression are similar in a lot of ways. Here are several signs and symptoms of both.

- Bad mood
- Headache
- Trouble concentrating
- Feeling tired
- Upset stomach
- Trouble sleeping
- Feeling irritable
- Feeling hungrier – or less hungry – than usual



© ISTOCKPHOTO/THINKSTOCK

There are differences, too. For example, sadness that doesn't go away and a loss of interest in activities you usually enjoy are two symptoms of depression. Here are some other ways you can tell the difference between [stress and depression](#) **SEE PAGE 8**.

STRESS

The feeling of having too many demands at one time is common.

Doesn't usually make it hard to function.

Can still have some good times.

Signs and symptoms come and go over the course of a day, or from week to week.

Support from others helps.

DEPRESSION

Sadness for most of the day; unable to feel joy or happiness.

May make it hard to function on a day-to-day basis.

You rarely experience good times.

Signs and symptoms don't seem to go away.

Support from others helps, but not as much, and you may isolate yourself.

✓ The good news is that treatment is available for both stress and depression. If you're feeling stressed, take steps to manage it. Research shows that unmanaged stress can lead to depression. If you think you may have depression, talk with your doctor, an employee assistance program counselor or a licensed mental health professional.

Eating a balanced VEGETARIAN DIET

If you are a [vegetarian](#) (SEE PAGE 8) or are thinking about becoming one, here's some advice for what to include in a balanced daily diet.

| FOOD GROUP | GRAINS | PROTEIN | VEGETABLES | FRUITS | FATS | DAIRY (or milk substitute) |
|------------|--------|---------|------------|--------|------|----------------------------|
| SERVINGS | 6 | 5 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 2 |

Here's a breakdown of key nutrients to include and sources where you can find them.

| NUTRIENT | VEGETARIAN SOURCES |
|---------------------|--|
| PROTEIN | BEANS, DAIRY PRODUCTS,* EGGS,* FISH,* LEGUMES, NUT BUTTERS, NUTS, PEAS, POULTRY,* SOY PRODUCTS |
| VITAMIN B-12 | DAIRY PRODUCTS; EGGS; FOODS FORTIFIED WITH VITAMIN B-12, SUCH AS BREAKFAST CEREALS AND SOME SOY MILK |
| IRON | BEANS, IRON-FORTIFIED CEREALS, LENTILS, SPINACH, WHOLE-WHEAT BREADS, SOME DRIED FRUITS |
| CALCIUM | DAIRY PRODUCTS; CALCIUM-FORTIFIED ORANGE JUICE; CALCIUM-FORTIFIED NONDAIRY MILK, SUCH AS SOY, RICE OR NUT MILKS; SOME DARK LEAFY GREENS, SUCH AS COLLARD, TURNIP, BOK CHOY AND MUSTARD |
| VITAMIN D | EGGS, VITAMIN D-FORTIFIED MILK, FORTIFIED ORANGE JUICE AND CEREALS |
| ZINC | BEANS, WHEAT GERM, ZINC-FORTIFIED CEREALS, DAIRY PRODUCTS |
| IODINE | SEAFOOD, IODIZED SALT |
| OMEGA-3 FATTY ACIDS | FISH, EGGS, WALNUTS, CANOLA OIL, SOY |

*TYPES OF VEGETARIANS

Vegans consume only plant-based foods.

Pescatarians eat fish.

Pollo-vegetarians eat poultry.

Flexitarians include small amounts of meat, poultry or fish.

Lacto-ovo vegetarians consume eggs and dairy products.

Lacto-vegetarians consume dairy products, but not eggs.

Ovo-vegetarians eat eggs, but don't consume dairy products.

✓ A vegetarian diet can be a healthy choice. On average, vegetarians eat less fat, fewer calories, and more fiber, potassium and vitamin C than do nonvegetarians. As a result, vegetarians tend to weigh less and are less likely to have high blood sugar and heart disease.

Type 2 diabetes: Calories vs. sugar

Which is more important to manage in your healthy diabetes diet: Calories or sugar?

Both are important.

Weight loss is recommended for anyone who has type 2 diabetes and is overweight or obese. There are many different ways you can lose weight. A calorie-controlled diet that limits carbohydrates or fat is one way to achieve a healthy weight.

But sugar is important, too. Sugar is a type of carbohydrate, and carbohydrates raise blood glucose. By choosing healthy carbohydrates and keeping your carbs consistent across meals, you can help keep your blood glucose in check. Foods with added sugar, such as candy, cakes and other sweets, can be part of your diet in small amounts now and then if they're substituted for other carbs.



Veggie-loaded pasta

Total prep and cooking time: 40 minutes | Serves 6 (1½ cups each)



This quick recipe makes a heart-healthy meal that you can cook in minutes!

- 1 T canola oil
- ½ cup chopped onion
- 1 cup sliced mushrooms
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 12 oz. frozen ground soy crumbles
- 2 cans (14.5 oz. each) diced, low-sodium tomatoes
- 2 cups small zucchini, cut into ¼-inch slices
- 1 tsp. Italian seasoning
- ½ tsp. ground black pepper
- 6 oz. whole-wheat bowtie pasta
- 3 T minced basil (3 tsp. dried basil)

1. Place a large saucepan over medium to high heat.
2. Add the oil, onion, mushrooms and garlic. Cook until the onion is tender.
3. Add soy crumbles, tomatoes, zucchini, Italian seasoning and pepper.
4. Bring mixture to a boil; reduce heat and simmer for 20 to 30 minutes or until the sauce thickens.
5. While the mixture is simmering, cook the pasta according to the package directions.
6. When the pasta is finished cooking, drain well and gently mix into the vegetable sauce.
7. Garnish with basil.

Nutrition analysis per serving:

260 calories, 6 g total fat (1 g saturated fat, 0 g trans fat, 3 g monounsaturated fat), 0 mg cholesterol, 300 mg sodium, 33 g total carbohydrate (8 g dietary fiber, 6 g sugars), 17 g protein

Serving tip:

Serve with Parmesan cheese (not included in nutrition analysis). Frozen ground soy crumbles look and taste much like ground beef and are easy to use in recipes. You can find them in the frozen section of many grocery stores.



WANT MORE INFORMATION?
Visit www.CarpentersHealth.org

For more on:

- Sources of fluoride
- Breast cancer tests
- Managing stress and depression
- Vegetarian advice, recipes

Search on:

- [fluoride](#)
- [breast cancer](#)
- [stress and depression](#)
- [vegetarian](#)

HealthQuestions

Q What are some common signs of a food allergy?

A Food allergies typically cause skin, gastrointestinal or respiratory signs and symptoms. You may experience any combination of these signs and symptoms.

On the skin, a food allergy can cause:

- Itching
- Hives
- Flushing
- Swelling
- Worsening eczema

In the gastrointestinal tract, a food allergy can cause:

- Vomiting
- Stomach pain
- Cramping
- Diarrhea

In the respiratory tract, a food allergy can cause:

- Wheezing
- A repetitive cough
- Swelling of the lips and throat
- Runny nose
- Itchy, watery or swelling of the eyes

Food allergy symptoms happen within several hours of taking in food. They often occur within minutes.

In some cases, a food allergy can be life-threatening. It may cause your throat to tighten. It can also cause your blood pressure to drop and make it hard to breathe. These reactions are known as anaphylactic shock. If you think someone is experiencing anaphylactic shock due to a food allergy, call 911 or your local emergency number.

If you have a serious or life-threatening food allergy, ask your doctor if you should carry epinephrine (EpiPen, Twinject) with you.

? HAVE A STORY IDEA OR HEALTH TOPIC YOU'D LIKE TO READ ABOUT?

Email it to us at EmbodyHealthnewsletter@mayo.edu or write to us at Mayo Clinic EmbodyHealth newsletter, 200 First St. SW, Rochester, MN 55905.

All correspondence becomes the property of Mayo Clinic, which reserves the right to edit material. Readers who send in questions will not be identified. We regret that we can't respond to each question.

TALKING WITH YOUR KIDS ABOUT SCHOOL



This unsatisfying parent-child conversation is repeated millions of times a day. What can you do to have a more useful conversation with your child about school? Experts offer these tips.

Give your child a chance to relax and have a snack before asking about his or her school day. You'll likely get a better response. Some experts recommend a 30-minute waiting period.

Ask specific, nonjudgmental questions about your child's school day. Ask, "What new thing did you learn today?" or "What questions did you ask in class?" Other options: "Did anything funny happen today?" or "Did anybody get in trouble today?" or "Was there anything really hard for you today?" Use students' and teachers' names to make your questions more personal and relevant.

If your child initiates a conversation about school, even about something seemingly trivial, listen intently. Don't dominate the conversation. Say, "Tell me more" or "I'm here to listen," to keep your child talking.

Allow your child to complain about school without making comments such as "You're exaggerating" or "It's not so bad." Use the complaint as an opportunity to identify a problem and help solve it.

If your child initiates conversation while you're busy doing something else, try to combine the two tasks. Say, "Help me make this salad for dinner while we talk about school."

Talk about what you did during your own day, especially something funny or interesting. Providing a model will help your kids learn the routine of discussing their day.