



# Wellness Today

For Parents & Families

## Is Eating Dinner Together Important?

Eating together as a family could seem like an unimportant task, but it is actually one of the top protective factors for children.

### Benefits of Family

#### Dinners:

- Higher self-esteem
- Increased resilience
- Lower rate of obesity
- Increased academic performance
- Lower risk of depression
- Lower risk of suicide ideation
- Increased feeling of safety
- Can contribute to family traditions (special birthday or holiday meals)
- Provide parents insight into children's moods and emotional needs
- Provide a place to solve problems
- Enhance language development
- Improve family relationships

For ideas on how to make the most of your family's dinner time, read [this handout from the American College of Pediatrics](#).

## Understanding Risk and Protective Factors of Suicide

Risk factors are personal or environmental characteristics that can increase the likelihood of someone dying by suicide.

### Risk Factors:

- Knowing someone who died by suicide
- Attempting suicide previously
- Abusing alcohol and drugs
- Experiencing mental disorders or chronic illnesses
- Having access to lethal means

However, it is important to mention that risk factors do not predict whether someone will die by suicide.

On the other hand, protective factors are personal or environmental characteristics that can protect someone from suicide.

### Protective Factors:

- Having access to effective mental health care
- Possessing coping and problem-solving skills
- Feeling connected to and supported by family, individuals, and community

- Having a purpose in life and high self-esteem
- Possessing cultural, personal, or religious beliefs that discourage suicide

Suicide prevention strives to increase the amount of protective factors an individual has while decreasing the amount of risk factors.

There are several steps parents can take to increase protective factors in their children's lives, including the following:

- Plan regular mealtimes when the whole family can sit down together to eat
- Teach and model positive coping methods and problem-solving skills
- Limit screen time, especially on social media platforms
- Invite and initiate open conversation. Create an environment that helps children feel comfortable opening up
- Safely store or lock any firearms and medicine in the house
- Encourage positive connections to teams, organizations, religions, etc.