

Frequency of family meals increased by a new school presentation

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New research shows that teaching young adolescents practical cooking skills leads to positive changes for the entire family. In an article published today in *Applied Physiology, Nutrition, and Metabolism*, an NRC Research Press journal, researchers evaluated the Kinect-Ed presentation and found an increase in the frequency of family dinners after participation.

Kinect-Ed, a 90-minute motivational nutrition education presentation, was created to encourage [young adolescents](#) (grades 6-8) to help with meal preparation and improve the frequency of family dinners. Kinect-Ed was developed by Sandi Richard, a Food Network host and Dr. Sarah Woodruff, a professor in the Department of Kinesiology at the University of Windsor. The Kinect-Ed presentation utilizes the school environment to provide interactive demonstrations that explain how consuming excess fat, sugar and salt can affect the body.

In this study, researchers from the University of Windsor found that after the Kinect-Ed presentation the frequency of family dinners increased resulting in more families eating dinner together. "This research builds on past studies that suggest that an increase in the frequency of family meals has been associated with better grades, better self-esteem and mental health and a lower likelihood of engaging in risky behaviours such as smoking and drinking," says Sara Santarossa, lead author and graduate student at the University of Windsor. "The results of our study show that introducing the Kinect-Ed program will create positive benefits, including improving the frequency of family

dinners and food preparation, improving confidence in cooking, and improving food preparation techniques". An increase in family meals during adolescence is also commonly associated with healthy eating and positive eating habits into young adulthood. Until now, limited research exists in the area of cooking and family meal interventions.

As an added bonus for parents, encouraging young adolescents to help prepare meals and get involved in the kitchen may reduce the time needed from parents to prepare the meal, which in turn could allow for more time for frequent family dinners. Promoting [family meals](#) is a relatively easy and cost-effective health promotion endeavour, and developing simple interventions may lead to healthier children.

Success of the program will require partnerships from educators and school boards. Kinect-Ed is designed to be presented in the schools and will require support from school boards and educators to allow this program to reach more adolescents.

The paper "An evaluation of the Kinect-Ed presentation, a motivating nutrition and cooking intervention for young adolescents in grades 6-8" by Sara Santarossa, Jillian Ciccone, and Sarah J. Woodruff was published today in the journal *Applied Physiology, Nutrition, and Metabolism*.

More information: *Applied Physiology, Nutrition, and Metabolism*, DOI: [10.1139/apnm-2015-0110](https://doi.org/10.1139/apnm-2015-0110).

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