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**ASPEN
Answers**

by Kathleen Cook, MS, LMFT

**DINING WITH FAMILY
BENEFITS TEEN
GIRLS**

Research shows that teenage girls who dine regularly with their families are less likely to engage in risky behaviors. In fact, in families who ate at least five meals per week together, the teen girls were much less likely to drink alcohol or smoke marijuana or cigarettes five years later. Previous analysis of the same study found a stronger association for girls than boys between family meals and a lower risk of eating disorders. Other research by some of the same researchers has also revealed a link between regular family meals and a lower risk of high-risk behaviors, including violence, school problems, and substance abuse in both boys and girls. It seems that sitting down together exerts a positive influence. Eating together as a family creates an atmosphere of sharing on an emotional level. This demonstration of caring lets your teen know they are important. It is one of the many attributes that builds resilience and coping for your teen. If you have concerns about your teen, our staff can assist in building those assets that resist negative influences. Our address is 2639 New Pinery Road, Suite 1 in Portage. We offer supportive direction with compassion.

P.S. Researchers in the above-mentioned study indicated that the "shared meal" need not be dinner to positively influence teen behavior.

ASPEN
Family Counseling
www.aspenfamilycounseling.com