

New survey: 91% of parents say their family is less stressed when they eat together

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Chronic, constant stress can increase lifetime risk of heart disease and stroke, but a new survey from the American Heart Association, a global force for longer, healthier lives for all, reveals regular mealtime with

others could be a simple solution to help manage stress.

Of the 1,000 U.S. adults nationwide surveyed in September 2022 for the American Heart Association's Healthy for Good movement by Wakefield Research, the vast majority (84%) say they wish they could share a meal more often with loved ones, and nearly all parents report lower levels of [stress](#) among their family when they regularly connect over a meal.

To make mealtime togetherness a little easier and help people claim the heart mind and body benefits that go with it, the American Heart Association will share practical and budget-friendly meal tips each Tuesday through December. People can follow [#TogetherTuesday](#) on [social media](#) or text 2gether to 51555 to get tips sent directly to their phone.

"Sharing meals with others is a great way to reduces stress, boost self-esteem and improve social connection, particularly for kids," said Erin Michos, M.D, M.H.S, American Heart Association volunteer, associate director of preventive cardiology at Johns Hopkins and a co-author of the American Heart Association's statement on Psychological Health, Well-being, and the Mind-Heart-Body Connection.

"Chronic, constant stress can also increase your lifetime risk of [heart](#) disease and stroke, so it is important for people to find ways to reduce and manage stress as much as possible, as soon as possible."

Connecting with friends, family, coworkers and neighbors benefits people beyond stress relief. In fact, the [survey](#) found 67% of people say sharing a meal remind them of the importance of connecting with other people, and 54% say it reminds them to slow down and take a break.

Those surveyed say they are more likely (59%) to make healthier food

choices when eating with other people but have difficulty aligning schedules with their friends or family to do so, according to the survey. Overall, respondents reported eating alone about half of the time.

"We know it's not always as easy as it sounds to get people together at mealtime. Like other healthy habits, give yourself permission to start small and build from there," Michos said. "Set a goal to gather friends, family or coworkers for one more meal together each week. If you can't get together in person, think about how you can share a meal together over the phone or a computer."

The American Heart Association's survey also identified the majority (65%) of adults say they are at least somewhat stressed and more than a quarter (27%) are extremely or very stressed. Nearly 7 in 10 (69%) of survey respondents who are employed full or part-time said they would feel less stressed at work if they had more time to take a break and share a meal with a co-worker.

More information: Glenn N. Levine et al, Psychological Health, Well-Being, and the Mind-Heart-Body Connection: A Scientific Statement From the American Heart Association, *Circulation* (2021). [DOI: 10.1161/CIR.0000000000000947](https://doi.org/10.1161/CIR.0000000000000947)

Provided by American Heart Association

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