Speaker 1 ([00:03](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/GrOw0c3uG3JHi8_BDEfxEgZmTFr2VhRv1NGWSwXNXhSeSjPB9uuIOXLz2CyxlI6iEqtUkJiYDHG7t4jO2UftymZx2P8?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3.27)):

The Missouri State Journal, a weekly program, keeping you in touch with Missouri State University.

Emily Yeap ([00:10](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/GrOw0c3uG3JHi8_BDEfxEgZmTFr2VhRv1NGWSwXNXhSeSjPB9uuIOXLz2CyxlI6iEqtUkJiYDHG7t4jO2UftymZx2P8?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=10.19)):

For busy families, eating a healthy meal together can be a big challenge. But it's important to make this happen to establish positive eating habits. I'm Emily Yeap.

Registered Dietitian Natalie Allen joins me today to discuss how to get more nutritious food in your family's diet. Allen is also a clinical assistant professor of biomedical sciences at Missouri State University.

Natalie Allen ([00:34](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/GrOw0c3uG3JHi8_BDEfxEgZmTFr2VhRv1NGWSwXNXhSeSjPB9uuIOXLz2CyxlI6iEqtUkJiYDHG7t4jO2UftymZx2P8?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=34.52)):

The number one key for families is, are you eating together? Do you sit down at the table? And this does not need to be a big, long drawn out process of making a fancy meal, but there's substantial research to show it benefits children and the families when they eat together around the dinner table, having conversation and naturally then, you're probably going to prepare a better, well-balanced meal.

The next thing is, I would look at your plate. On your plate, iss there some lean protein? So that could be meat like a chicken, a turkey, fish, beef. Is there some starch? So that could be your rice, your potatoes, your noodles, and then do you have fruits and vegetables? Always, always, always, we want to have fruits and vegetables at our meal. They are lower in calories, but provide lots of nutrition. So look at the balance of your plate.

Emily Yeap ([01:27](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/GrOw0c3uG3JHi8_BDEfxEgZmTFr2VhRv1NGWSwXNXhSeSjPB9uuIOXLz2CyxlI6iEqtUkJiYDHG7t4jO2UftymZx2P8?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=87.92)):

According to Allen, it's crucial for kids to learn good eating habits at home.

Natalie Allen ([01:32](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/GrOw0c3uG3JHi8_BDEfxEgZmTFr2VhRv1NGWSwXNXhSeSjPB9uuIOXLz2CyxlI6iEqtUkJiYDHG7t4jO2UftymZx2P8?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=92.9)):

I can't reiterate enough, the habits that kids develop at a young age, they really do stick with them. Are you serving water at your dinner table or are you letting them have a sugary drink? Are you doing a lot of fried foods? Instead of doing that, could you bake them? I know with my own kids, if I steam or roast vegetables, they're much more likely to eat them, then something from a can. The other thing is, can you sneak those veggies in somehow? So, if I'm making chicken fajitas, then I would add roasted red peppers and onions, somehow get those veggies in there and my kids don't even think really anything more of it than if I just had chicken. So looking at what your family likes, how can you make it healthier?

And then with younger children, if you can cut up the fruit and I know it sounds like a really small thing to do, but they're much more likely to eat it. Every night at my house, I cut up some fruit and put it on the table and I'll make a fruit salad and it could be random. Like last night, we had a pear, a couple of apples and some blackberries. So I just cut all that up and threw it together. It's a great way to use up what you have in the refrigerator, but kids tend to eat it more when it's prepped and washed and cut up versus handing them a whole apple.

Emily Yeap ([02:52](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/GrOw0c3uG3JHi8_BDEfxEgZmTFr2VhRv1NGWSwXNXhSeSjPB9uuIOXLz2CyxlI6iEqtUkJiYDHG7t4jO2UftymZx2P8?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=172.19)):

What's Allen’s advice for dealing with picky eaters?

Natalie Allen ([02:56](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/GrOw0c3uG3JHi8_BDEfxEgZmTFr2VhRv1NGWSwXNXhSeSjPB9uuIOXLz2CyxlI6iEqtUkJiYDHG7t4jO2UftymZx2P8?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=176.15)):

Picky eaters can be a challenge. Thankfully, most kids do grow out of that. Number one, when the child sits down at the table, make sure they're hungry. If they've just had a snack and then they're sitting down and they're not that hungry and they're kind of piddling around, that's harder to get them to eat and try new things. Number two, offer the new things first. If you offer chicken nuggets first, they're going to go for it. But could you offer something different and see if they'll like it. Also, I can't reiterate enough, what the parents are modeling is huge. If you want your child to be eating brussel sprouts, then you need to be eating brussels sprouts also at the dinner table and see how that goes. So, model those good behaviors.

Starting young with kids is key. When they're babies or toddlers, giving them a variety of different foods that are appropriate will help expand their palette and they'll like different things. Also, I want to encourage parents. Don't be discouraged if your child goes through a few months where they'll only eat one thing. That is okay, that's called a food jag, not a big concern, but then keep offering the other choices, keep encouraging, keep modeling and hopefully they'll get back on track

Emily Yeap ([04:10](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/GrOw0c3uG3JHi8_BDEfxEgZmTFr2VhRv1NGWSwXNXhSeSjPB9uuIOXLz2CyxlI6iEqtUkJiYDHG7t4jO2UftymZx2P8?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=250.53)):

Planning ahead makes eating healthy easier.

Natalie Allen ([04:15](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/GrOw0c3uG3JHi8_BDEfxEgZmTFr2VhRv1NGWSwXNXhSeSjPB9uuIOXLz2CyxlI6iEqtUkJiYDHG7t4jO2UftymZx2P8?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=255.12)):

For example, maybe on Sunday you grill 15 chicken breasts and then Sunday night, you have grilled chicken with a sweet potato and some veggies. Then on Monday, you have a chicken sandwich using that chicken you grilled. Then on Tuesday, maybe you make a pasta with veggies and you add, cut up grilled chicken into the pasta with the sauce. So, you've only had to cook the chicken once, but you have three meals out of it. That's a really great way to plan ahead. That's what I do with my own family.

Meat to me is one of the hardest things because it takes a little bit more time and it has to be thawed. So could you cook up a bunch of hamburger and then use it in various ways throughout the week? The key to any of this though, is making your grocery list and planning ahead. It's really hard on the fly.

Emily Yeap ([05:06](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/GrOw0c3uG3JHi8_BDEfxEgZmTFr2VhRv1NGWSwXNXhSeSjPB9uuIOXLz2CyxlI6iEqtUkJiYDHG7t4jO2UftymZx2P8?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=306.3)):

That was Registered Dietitian Natalie Allen. I'm Emily Yeap for the Missouri State Journal.

Speaker 1 ([05:13](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/GrOw0c3uG3JHi8_BDEfxEgZmTFr2VhRv1NGWSwXNXhSeSjPB9uuIOXLz2CyxlI6iEqtUkJiYDHG7t4jO2UftymZx2P8?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=313.44)):

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