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Youth share importance of family mealtime in living a healthy lifestyle

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Youth4Health is a community based outreach program with an integrated approach toward support of nutrition, physical activity and family behavior change to help the community address the problem of childhood obesity. Prior to a 2-week summer camp, youth 9-17 years of age answered questionnaires about their basic health status, food knowledge, attitudes about nutrition, physical activity levels, and their food and family environment along with anthropometric measures. The focus in this study looks at the environment of family mealtime and how the youth perceive their family environment. Results show youth's perceive the shared time at a family meal positively relates to a sense of being cared for by parents, as well as mentored in socializing with others. Additionally, with youth who eat regularly with their family spending less time with screen time on weekends has the potential to aid with the of increase of physical activity and family interaction. Finally, youth feel taking time to eat a meal as a family demonstrates their parent's care for them and they are more likely to communicate with their parents about any problems. Future research may want to identify means of increasing time for family meals with youths and ways in which families may use this time for sharing health values.

Biography

Heather R McCollum is an Associate Professor at California State University – Northridge. She received her doctorate from the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities. Her expertise is in family and health. Her current research has focused on childhood obesity and community outreach as a means of addressing this serious issue. Her research was funded for \$450,000.00 by Health Resources & Services Administration, USA.

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