- Children—nutrition

Study says families who dine together are healthier

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A study published on Tuesday by the Cancer Care Foundation linked families that dine together with healthier diets for children.

The survey conducted in 2022 and 2023 found that children who enjoyed meals with their family reported having a significantly better diet than children allowed to use electronic devices while eating, the foundation said in a statement.

The poll showed that 71 percent and 45 percent of children who shared meals with family reported having daily servings of vegetables and fruits respectively, and 13 percent reported having four or more sugary drinks a month.

In comparison, among the children who were routinely allowed to use electronic devices while eating their meals, only 61 percent and 37 percent reported having daily servings of vegetables and fruits respectively, while 24 percent had four or more sugary drinks a month.

The findings showed that the more frequently children shared meals with their family, the healthier their diet they had, the statement cited foundation president Chen Yueh-ching (陳月卿) as saying.

Families that banned children from using phones or tablets during mealtimes reported a corresponding improvement in the children's diet, she said.

The survey additionally found that 80 percent of obese Taiwanese children habitually used gadgets as they ate, Chen said.

The improved eating habits likely reflect the role parents played in ensuring children ate healthy foods, she said, adding that eating together is important for bonding and building healthy habits for families.

Parents are urged to make soft drinks for their children as a replacement for saccharine beverages sold commercially, Chen said.

Fruits, vegetables and nuts could be blended in phytochemical, vitamin and mineral-rich smoothies, she added.

An earlier study published on Sunday by the Child Welfare Foundation showed that 30.2 percent of Taiwanese children are overweight, 5.2 points higher than the average obesity rate globally.