

Kitchen Connections made online



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Kitchen Connections is one of the North Hastings Children's Services EarlyON Centre's most popular programs. It is an interactive nutrition and cooking program that helps families learn how to plan healthy meals together. It is usually held in the kitchen of the Bancroft Pentecostal Tabernacle but now because of COVID-19, other opportunities have opened up and families now cook in their own kitchens together.

Many families participate through the Zoom video conferencing platform but those who do not have good internet access can call in using their phone. The goal is to increase a family's food knowledge while at the same time helping to plan healthy meals on a budget. Currently there are 10 to 15 families who sign up every month.

Each month each family receives a food kit to go with the meals that they will be making together during the Kitchen Connections events. These events happen every Wednesday, and each week has a theme, whether it is budgeting or healthy eating. Sometimes special guests join the meetings such as a dietitian to talk about servings sizes or help with special food needs, or the fire chief who comes to talk about fire safety in the kitchen.

Some of the recipes include breakfast items such as waffles with Greek yogurt, items for lunch such as a slow cooker taco soup, and meals for supper like chicken and dumplings.

The plan for each recipe is to try to include each of the four food groups in each plate. Each recipe is aimed to be under \$15 and can serve four to six people so that there are enough servings for the whole family.

?I won't lie, I was a little nervous when I first started Kitchen Connections, especially as mom of two kids under the age of two. I must say that our experience has been amazing, besides all the mess and occasional crying. The meals are simple, budget friendly, quick, and delicious for our busy family. It has helped me understand that messes are sometimes part of the fun and the learning process. Our little one loves smelling, touching, and of course eating all the ingredients while we're cooking. It's great to see her gaining more confidence in the kitchen, learning new skills, and trying new foods every week. I enjoy sharing my love for food and cooking with her. This program has really helped us create wonderful memories and we are so grateful for the opportunity to

participate.? explains the Foulds family who use the Kitchen Connections.

The program works like an online cooking class with members from the EarlyON team leading the class. However, many of the families do share tips and tricks of their own during the cooking events. The online Zoom has enabled families to try the recipes in their own kitchens while at the same time making it possible to see each other and talk about what they are doing and what helps them the best and problem solving any issues that may come up together.

Kitchen Connections is funded by United Way Hastings Prince Edward so it is free to families and they can register for the program by emailing register@nhcs.ca. The pickup and delivery of the food kits that the EarlyON team shop for and create are able to be picked up at the NHCS building during scheduled pick up times. Each kit also includes nutritional information and resources that can help identify cooking tips. Each kit also includes the nutritional facts of every meal.