

BREAKFAST BASICS Nutrition News You Can Use



Learn how to start every day right with a healthy breakfast



Our dietitians receive hundreds of questions each year about a wide variety of nutrition topics. Their timely and trustworthy insights and ideas can help you and your family live healthier lives.

The most important meal of the day

Relaxed sit-down breakfasts are becoming a thing of the past. Very few of us have time for the traditional American breakfast that included fruit juice, toast and eggs or hot cereal. Long commutes, demanding schedules, and other time pressures all contribute to morning routines without a healthy breakfast. More than one third of the U.S. population skips breakfast. And some who eat breakfast, trade off nutrition for convenience. This is a big health issue since a nutritious breakfast is a very important part of a healthy lifestyle. Because breakfast plays such an important role in a healthy diet, it's sometimes referred to as 'the most important meal of the day.' Studies show that eating breakfast regularly has a positive impact in three main areas;

- Improving performance at work or school,
- Maintaining a healthy weight,
- Improving overall health and well being by elevating the nutritional quality of your diet.

Breakfast and performance

Adults who eat breakfast generally have better overall work performance. That's because breakfast replenishes blood sugar levels, which helps to provide energy and improve concentration. A good breakfast allows you to be more alert and productive throughout the day. Research shows that children and adolescents who eat breakfast daily perform better at school. Breakfast helps students concentrate and pay better attention to their studies. Students who eat breakfast are also less likely to be overweight, and they get sick less often than those who don't eat breakfast.

Breakfast and weight control

Many people believe that skipping breakfast will help them to lose weight. Actually skipping breakfast has the opposite effect. Studies show that people who eat a healthy breakfast are less likely to be overweight than those who don't. Breakfast eaters weigh less because starting the day with a healthy meal helps control cravings throughout the day. People who skip breakfast are more likely to reach for unplanned and unhealthy snacks. These snacks can quickly add up to many more calories than a healthy breakfast, which leads to weight gain. Studies show that breakfast eaters are more successful at losing weight and maintaining their weight loss.

Breakfast and overall nutrition

People who eat breakfast regularly get more vitamins, minerals and other nutrients in their diets. Typical breakfast foods such as milk, fortified cereals, orange juice, and fruit can provide you with more than 30% of the daily values for important nutrients such as fiber, calcium, vitamin C, vitamin D, potassium, and folate. These nutrients are a critical part of a healthy diet. Fiber helps reduce cholesterol levels and lowers the risk of heart disease. Calcium along with vitamin D helps to build strong bones and teeth. Potassium helps to regulate blood pressure. Vitamin C and other antioxidants help protect cells from damage.

Since many nutrient-dense foods like grains, fruit, and dairy are eaten at breakfast, skipping this important meal could cause you to fall short of needed nutrients by the end of the day. Without a healthy, balanced breakfast it is very difficult to meet your daily nutritional needs.



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Since everyone's health history and nutritional needs are so different, please make sure that you talk with your doctor and a registered dietitian to get advice about the diet and exercise plan that's right for you.

Breakfast best choices

Whole-grains, fruit, low-fat dairy and lean proteins should be at the top of your breakfast list. Combining these foods at breakfast has the added benefit of helping you to feel fuller longer. A good example is oatmeal with low-fat milk and blueberries or other fruit. Ready-to-eat whole grain cereal and milk with fruit is another good option. Carefully reading food labels can help. Look for a cereal that has at least 4 grams of fiber, less than around 10 to 12 grams of sugar and whole grain listed as the first ingredient.

Breakfast on-the-go

For those of us that don't have a lot of time and need to eat breakfast in the car, at work, or in a classroom there are convenient, portable breakfast choices that are also good-for-you. Look for fruit, low fat breakfast sandwiches, whole-wheat bagels; whole-grain breakfast bars and yogurt parfaits. If you know what to look for it is possible to get a quick, nutritious breakfast wherever you go.

The scoop on breakfast's "big three"

There have been many contradictory messages about coffee, eggs and even juice, but the bottom line is: in moderation they can be part of a healthy breakfast.

Coffee: Coffee is the most popular drink at breakfast. Research shows that the amount of caffeine in 2-3 eight ounce cups a day does not pose health problems for most healthy people. If you drink coffee, go easy on sugar and choose skim or low fat milk.

Eggs: Eggs are low in calories, rich in vitamins, minerals, protein, and even antioxidants. However, eggs do contain cholesterol. Studies show that if you are healthy, you can enjoy an average of one egg per day without increasing your risk of heart disease. However, if you do have health risk factors (like high cholesterol, or diabetes) you may want to skip the yolk and choose egg whites or other low cholesterol egg substitutes.

Fruit Juice: 100% fruit juice provides important vitamins, minerals and antioxidants. However, fruit juice is high in natural sugars which provide the same amount of calories as the added sugar in sweetened beverages. So while fruit juice has great nutritional benefits, make sure to limit the amount you drink to one six ounce serving per day for children and two six ounce servings per day for adults.

Make time for breakfast!

Eating breakfast regularly can improve your energy levels, help control weight, and increase the overall quality of your diet. For peak performance, start everyday right with a healthy breakfast — an important part of a balanced diet and healthy lifestyle.