

# The Importance of Breakfast<sup>1</sup>

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Breakfast is the most important meal of the day. However, it is often one of the most skipped meals. Eating breakfast is vital because after 8–12 hours without food, the brain and muscles need "energy" to function. We get energy from the glucose contained in foods. We also get important nutrients such as vitamins, minerals, dietary fiber, and protein.

## Benefits

Eating breakfast is important for everyone. For adults, eating breakfast is a great way to help control body weight because it keeps them from overeating during other meals.

Breakfast provides children and teens with the energy they need for improved:

- memory, concentration, and productivity
- attention, creativity, and mood
- behaviors and school performance

Furthermore, eating breakfast as a family is an excellent opportunity to share and communicate with your kids!

## Why do people skip breakfast?

**Lack of time:** In most of today's families both parents work and have very busy lives. There is no time to sit and have breakfast as a family.

To save time in the morning, cut and prepare fruits the night before and use easy to prepare foods such as ready to eat cereals. Also, use easy to carry foods such as yogurt, fruit, 100% fruit juice, bagels, breakfast bars, trail mix of nuts, dried fruits, or dry cereal. Register your kids in the School Breakfast Program since studies show that these programs offer a well-balanced breakfast.



**Lack of appetite:** People do not wake up hungry if they ate too much food at a late hour the night before. If you are not hungry first thing in the morning, take a small portion of food such as a cup of milk, 100% fruit juice, or whole grain toast, and eat your breakfast later when you are hungry.

**Same old breakfast:** People tire of the same breakfast everyday. Do not be afraid to change! Instead of skipping breakfast, eat your favorite food and try different combinations. Try leftovers, breakfast burrito, or fruit pizza. Be creative!

**Belief that skipping breakfast helps you lose weight:** This is false—skipping breakfast makes people prone to eat more during other meals. [MyPyramid.gov](http://MyPyramid.gov) is a Web site that provides recommendations for the amounts of food from each food groups based on your individual needs. You will notice that it is important to eat

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breakfast to meet the daily recommendations for whole grains, fruits, and milk. Make sure you read reliable sources of information.

### Healthy Recommendations

- ✓ Vary your breakfast. Include at least 3 food groups: the milk, the fruit, and the grains group.
- ✓ Choose low-fat milk, low-fat yogurt or low-fat cheese. Remember that just a glass (8 oz) of milk or yogurt gives you around 30% of the daily calcium recommendation that you need each day.
- ✓ Choose whole fruits instead of juice and include whole grains such as oatmeal, or ready-to-eat cereal. These foods provide fiber, vitamins, and minerals that you need.
- ✓ Use half whole-wheat flour and half white flour when preparing items such as pancakes, waffles or muffins.
- ✓ Avoid foods that are high in sugars such as donuts, croissants, biscuits, and sweetened beverages such as sodas. These foods will give you a burst of energy, but you will feel hungry again later.
- ✓ Avoid fast food restaurants that offer foods that are high in calories, fat, cholesterol, and sodium. Instead, make healthy breakfast choices such as home made pancakes with light syrup and no margarine, whole grain toast, bagels, English muffins, low-fat muffins, plain scrambled eggs, or breakfast

sandwiches on low-fat breads. Reduce fat by skipping bacon or sausage; choosing low-fat brands or turkey bacon or opting for nontraditional choices such as grilled chicken or salmon.

- ✓ Look at the Nutrition Facts label for fiber, sugar, and vitamin and mineral contents. For example, when choosing ready-to-eat cereal and breakfast bars, purchase products with 3 grams or more of dietary fiber, 3 grams or less of fat, and no more than 8 grams of sugar per serving. Beware of products that are high in calories, fat, and sugar.

### Breakfast Ideas

- Whole-grain toast with 100 % fruit spread and one cup of low-fat milk or yogurt.
- Whole wheat flour tortilla with scrambled eggs, boiled potato, refried beans, or salsa with a sprinkling of low-fat cheese and one cup of 100% fruit juice.
- Smoothies prepared with milk or yogurt, any kind of fruit, and with a topping of whole grain cereal.

### References & Resources

- <http://www.mypyramid.gov/>
- <http://www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines/>
- <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Breakfast/>
- <http://www.frac.org/pdf/breakfastforlearning.pdf>