

## JUMP START YOUR DAY

Breakfast gets your day off to a healthy start. But for a variety of reasons, it's one meal that is not always taken seriously. According to research from the U.S. Department of Agriculture in 2015, only 44% of Americans eat breakfast every day. Yet, eating breakfast has many benefits for your health and weight loss efforts. Below you'll find some smart reasons to eat breakfast, plus practical, delicious ways to make breakfast an important part of your day.

### Why Eat Breakfast?

Breakfast refuels your body. It replenishes blood glucose stores, the main energy source for the brain. Your brain needs glucose for sustained mental activity and your muscles need glucose to perform physical activity throughout the day.

According to research, eating breakfast can improve concentration, productivity, and problem-solving ability, and reduce the morning fatigue and irritability found more often in people who skip breakfast. For children and teens, eating breakfast improves learning and performance at school. If you're not used to eating breakfast, even eating a little food in the morning is better than nothing.

Breakfast offers a nutritional advantage. Studies have shown that people who eat breakfast, especially if it includes cereal, get more carbohydrate, fiber and many nutrients, and less fat and cholesterol in their diets than people who consume other types of breakfast or skip breakfast altogether.

Eating breakfast may also be good for your health. Research has shown that breakfast eaters tend to have lower blood cholesterol levels than those who skip breakfast. Eating breakfast can also benefit your weight loss efforts. It helps prevent hunger that could lead to overeating at your next meal. Skipping breakfast, on the other hand, does not necessarily save you calories over the course of the day. Choosing a high-fiber breakfast can help fill you up, so that you consume fewer calories at lunch and take in fewer total calories for the day. Eating fresh fruit instead of drinking juice, having higher-fiber cereals, like bran cereal, and choosing whole wheat instead of white bread or eating reduced-calorie bread, which is higher in fiber than regular bread, can boost the fiber in your diet.

### Off to a Good Start

If you normally forego breakfast, deciding to eat something in the morning is a good start. What you eat is important, since your food choices can impact your energy level in the morning. For instance, a breakfast consisting of high-sugar foods, like candy, soda, or juice, can cause a quick surge and then decline in energy and blood glucose levels, bringing on feelings of hunger shortly thereafter. However, eating a balanced breakfast, containing carbohydrate (sugar and starch), protein, and fat helps sustain your energy and glucose levels and delays hunger for several hours. Juice, cereal and low-fat milk, for example, make up a balanced breakfast.

If you're not a breakfast eater, you've probably got plenty of reasons for skipping your morning meal. Here are some ideas to help you get rid of the breakfast excuses so you can start your day in a healthful way:

#### I'm not Hungry

Have something light, like juice or toast. Later in the day, have a mid-morning snack, like yogurt, crackers with low-fat cheese, or a bagel with light cream cheese.

#### I Have No Time

Keep foods on hand that are quick to prepare, like cold cereal, instant hot cereal, bagels, low-fat frozen microwave pancakes, bread, yogurt, juice, low-fat milk, and low-fat cheese. Cut up fruit or set out the cereal and utensils the night before. Keep your breakfast simple; for example, choose hot or cold cereal with raisins and milk, or an English muffin with low-fat cheese or spreadable fruit. Try a quick instant breakfast drink by blending one cup of nonfat yogurt or skim milk; fresh fruit; four ice cubes; and sweetener, like a sugar substitute or a teaspoon of honey in a blender. If you're still feeling rushed, wake up a few minutes earlier.

## **I'm on the Road**

If you're pressed for time, order room service the night before. In a restaurant, choose lower-fat menu items. For instance, select juice, cereal and low-fat milk, or bagel with jam or light cream cheese instead of a croissant or pastry. Go easy on the butter or margarine when spreading it on toast. Ask for a poached egg instead of an omelet or fried egg, and skip the bacon or sausage.

## **Breakfast is Boring**

Perk up your basic morning meal with some out-of-the-ordinary textures and flavors. For example, top cold cereal with sliced kiwi, blueberries, or chopped peaches. Try different cooked cereals, such as oatmeal, Wheatena®, Cream of Wheat®, or couscous. Add dried fruit to cooked cereal, such as chopped apricots, dates, apple rings, or raisins. Or spice up cereal with cinnamon, allspice, or nutmeg. On a bagel, spread light cream cheese mixed with chopped fruit or vegetables. Fill an egg or egg-substitute omelet with a variety of vegetables, such as spinach, mushrooms, or chopped tomatoes.

## **I Don't Like Breakfast Foods**

Breakfast does not have to consist of typical breakfast foods. If you prefer soup, leftover pasta, or a tuna sandwich, that's okay. Simply choose nutritious foods that appeal to you.