

BREAKFAST

WHAT IS BREAKFAST?

Sounds obvious doesn't it? We all know breakfast is the first meal of the day but breakfast literally means "to break the fast". While you've been sleeping your body hasn't had any food and so you've been fasting for around 8 hours! That's why breakfast is such an important meal for people of all ages. This is the perfect time to give your body some healthy fuel to set it up for the day ahead. It's better to have fresh fruit rather than dried fruit or fruit juice because fresh fruit has more fibre. What's more, dried fruit can contribute to tooth decay if eaten in large amounts because of its stickiness.

WHY IS BREAKFAST IMPORTANT?

> Breakfast can improve your attention, mental performance and memory.¹ If you start the day hungry your body stays in a fasting state which makes it much more difficult to concentrate. Eating breakfast has been shown to improve learning, memory and academic performance in school children. So don't start the day behind the eight ball, give yourself a fighting chance to perform at your best.

> Breakfast helps boost your intake of important nutrients.¹ Foods consumed at breakfast are usually breads, cereals, milk and yogurt which contribute carbohydrates, calcium and fibre to your diet. People who miss breakfast usually don't make up these nutrients later. What's more, many cereals are fortified with important vitamins and minerals which help you meet your nutrient needs for the day.

> Eating breakfast helps you maintain a healthy weight.² Skipping breakfast is not an effective way to lose weight - in fact people who skip breakfast are more likely to be heavier than those who find the time to have some food in the morning.^{3,4} High fibre and protein choices will help you feel full for longer and can help prevent you from snacking on high fat, high sugar choices mid-morning, which is what can happen if your blood sugar levels drop and your body is craving a quick sugar fix.

MAKE TIME FOR BREAKFAST

Many people think they don't have time for breakfast but eating breakfast is a habit worth acquiring. If you skip breakfast you are unlikely to meet your daily needs for some essential vitamins and minerals and you'll have less energy. Five minutes is all it takes to eat some yogurt and a piece of fruit. If you don't have time at home try to have a proper breakfast when you get to work or school. If that's really not possible then there are now a number of healthy on-the-go choices of breakfast drinks and bars so you don't miss out altogether.

QUICK AND HEALTHY BREAKFAST IDEAS

CEREAL:

- > Choose a wholegrain or high fibre cereal, untoasted muesli or porridge
- > Add some low fat milk, hot or cold
- > Top with fresh, tinned, frozen or dried fruit and low fat yogurt



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LIGHT and EASY:

- > Tub of low fat yogurt topped with fruit or nuts
- > Low fat custard with sliced banana and/or strawberries
- > Fruit Smoothies: blend low fat milk, low fat yogurt and fruit
- > Fresh Fruit salad - plain or jazz it up with some low fat yogurt

TOAST

- > Raisin toast with thinly spread margarine or light cream cheese
- > Wholegrain/Wholemeal or Rye toast
- > Add a topping: baked beans, ricotta cheese or cottage cheese, peanut butter, avocado, fresh tomato, smoked salmon and low fat cream cheese
- > Scrambled or poached eggs with lean ham, spinach and grilled tomato

Visit www.recipes.com.au for more healthy breakfast recipe ideas

References:

1. Perspectives in Applied Nutrition 1996; 3³:204-212
2. Affenito SG et al. Breakfast consumption by African-American and white adolescent girls correlates positively with calcium and fiber intake and negatively with body mass index. J Am Diet Assoc. 2005 Jun;105⁶:938-45
3. The University of Sydney National Children's Nutrition & Physical Activity Study, 2003
4. Cho S. et al. The effect of breakfast type on total daily energy intake and body mass index: results from the third National Health & Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES 3), Journal of the American College of Nutrition 2003, Vol 22, No 4 296-302.

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