



Smart Food Choices

Breakfast—"Break the fast from the night before"

Fact Sheet FS1058



Cooperative Extension

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY HEALTH SCIENCES

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Breakfast plays an important role in children's health. Children who eat breakfast have a higher intake of vitamins and calcium and therefore are more likely to meet the government's recommendations for nutrients as compared to children who skip breakfast. Research has shown that regardless of income, children who eat breakfast eat a better variety of foods, as well as, more grains, fruit products, and milk. They also consume less saturated fat.

Do you and your family skip breakfast? You are not alone. Lifestyles have quickened with parents and kids having many commitments. We often do not spend the time and skip breakfast altogether. Over the past twenty years there has been a steady decrease in the number of children who eat breakfast. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) estimates that 90 percent of 1 to 5-year-old children eat breakfast. However, the percentage of children that consume breakfast dramatically decreases to only 14 percent for teenagers.

There are many factors that determine whether breakfast is part of the daily routine including what we will eat. The following issues impact the consumption of breakfast and they include: lack of time, not wanting to make breakfast, limited availability of ready-to-eat foods, lack of someone to share the meal with, not being hungry, the influence of friends and classmates, long commutes, dieting, not feeling well, not liking the food served, not having food available, and lack of funds for their family to purchase enough food.

Eating Breakfast Helps School Performance

Studies have shown that omitting breakfast may interfere with learning. Breakfast consumption does improve school attendance and has a positive effect on the overall nutritional quality of a child's diet. Research has also shown that students who eat breakfast have higher reading and math scores, and improved memory on cognitive tests.

Skipping Breakfast is Not a Good Weight Loss Diet

Some kids skip breakfast because they sleep too late or because they think it's a way to stay thin. But skipping breakfast does not help people maintain a healthy weight. Studies have found that children who skip breakfast are at greater risk for being overweight. This may be because they get so hungry that they end up overeating at other meals. It is better for kids to eat three small or moderately sized meals a day with some healthy snacks in between. Eating regular meals will help a child's body to process food more efficiently than if the child were to eat one or two large meals a day.

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Breakfast Foods Can Be Quick, Easy & Healthy

Any breakfast food is better than no breakfast at all. Try to make healthy selections and eliminate the doughnuts or pastries all the time. They're high in calories, sugar, and fat and don't contain the nutrients that everyone needs. Just like with other meals, eat a variety of foods, including: grains (breads and cereals), protein (meats, beans, and nuts), fruits and vegetables, milk, cheese, and yogurt. Some common ones: eggs, French toast, waffles, or pancakes (try wheat or whole-grain varieties); cold cereal and milk; hot cereal, such as oatmeal or cream of wheat (try some dried fruit or nuts on top); whole-grain toast, bagel, or English muffin with cheese; yogurt with fruit or nuts; fruit smoothie, such as a strawberry smoothie.

Other ideas include: banana dog (peanut butter, a banana, and raisins in a long whole-grain bun), breakfast taco (shredded cheese on a tortilla, folded in half and micro-waved; top with salsa), country cottage cheese (apple butter mixed with cottage cheese), fruit and cream cheese sandwich (use strawberries or other fresh fruit), sandwich - grilled cheese, peanut butter and jelly, or another favorite, leftovers.

References

http://kidshealth.org/parent/nutrition_center/healthy_eating/breakfast.html#cat20738. Accessed "Breakfast Basics" August 22, 2012

<http://www.choosemyplate.gov/>

For more info: <http://njaes.rutgers.edu/fchs/> & <http://www.getmovinggethealthynj.rutgers.edu/>

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