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Breakfast Basics

You probably heard it from your own parents: Breakfast is the most important meal of the day. But now you're the one saying it — to your sleepy, frazzled, grumpy kids, who insist "I'm not hungry" as you try to get everyone fed and moving in the morning.

Even if you eat a healthy morning meal every day, it can be tough to get kids fueled up in time for school, childcare, or a day of play. But it's important to try. Here's how to make breakfast more appealing for everyone.

Why Bother With Breakfast?

Breakfast is a great way to give the body the refueling it needs. Kids who eat breakfast tend to eat healthier overall and are more likely to participate in physical activities — two great ways to help maintain a healthy weight.

Skipping breakfast can make kids feel tired, restless, or irritable. In the morning, their bodies need to refuel for the day ahead after going without food for 8 to 12 hours during sleep. Their mood and energy can drop by midmorning if they don't eat at least a small morning meal.

Breakfast also can help keep kids' weight in check. Breakfast kick-starts the body's metabolism, the process by which the body converts the fuel in food to energy. And when the metabolism gets moving, the body starts burning calories.

Also, people who don't eat breakfast often consume more calories throughout the day and are more likely to be overweight. That's because someone who skips breakfast is likely to get famished before lunchtime and snack on high-calorie foods or overeat at lunch.

Breakfast Brain Power

It's important for kids to have breakfast every day, but *what* they eat in the morning is crucial too. Choosing breakfast foods that are rich in whole grains, fiber, and protein while low in added sugar may boost kids' attention span, concentration, and memory — which they need to learn in school.

Kids who eat breakfast are more likely to get fiber, calcium, and other important nutrients. They also tend to keep their weight under control, have lower blood cholesterol levels and fewer absences from school, and make fewer trips to the school nurse with stomach complaints related to hunger.

Making Breakfast Happen

It would be great to serve whole-grain waffles, fresh fruit, and low-fat milk each morning. But it can be difficult to make a healthy breakfast happen when you're rushing to get yourself and the kids ready in the morning and juggling the general household chaos.

So try these practical suggestions to ensure that — even in a rush — your kids get a good breakfast before they're out the door:

- stock your kitchen with healthy breakfast options
- prepare as much as you can the night before (gets dishes and utensils ready, cut up fruit, etc.)
- get everyone up 10 minutes earlier
- let kids help plan and prepare breakfast
- have grab-and-go alternatives (fresh fruit; individual boxes or baggies of whole-grain, low-sugar cereal; yogurt or smoothies; trail mix) on days when there is little or no time to eat

If kids aren't hungry first thing in the morning, be sure to pack a breakfast that they can eat a little later on the bus or between classes. Fresh fruit, cereal, nuts, or half a peanut butter and banana sandwich are nutritious, easy to make, and easy for kids to take along.

You also may want to check out the breakfasts available at school or daycare. Some offer breakfasts and provide

them for free or at reduced prices for families with limited incomes. If your kids eat breakfast outside the home, talk with them about how to make healthy selections.

What **not** to serve for breakfast is important too. Sure, toaster pastries and some breakfast bars are portable, easy, and appealing to kids. But many have no more nutritional value than a candy bar and are high in sugar and calories. Read the nutrition labels carefully before you toss these breakfast bars and pastries into your shopping cart.

Breakfast Ideas to Try

The morning meal doesn't have to be all about traditional breakfast items. You can mix it up to include different foods, even the leftovers from last night's dinner, and still provide the nutrients and energy kids need for the day.

Try to serve a balanced breakfast that includes some carbohydrates, protein, and fiber. Carbs are a good source of immediate energy for the body. Energy from protein tends to kick in after the carbs are used up. Fiber helps provide a feeling of fullness and, therefore, discourages overeating. And when combined with healthy drinks, fiber helps move food through the digestive system, preventing constipation and lowering cholesterol.

Good sources of these nutrients include:

- **carbohydrates:** whole-grain cereals, brown rice, whole-grain breads and muffins, fruits, vegetables
- **protein:** low-fat or nonfat dairy products, lean meats, eggs, nuts (including nut butters), seeds, and cooked dried beans
- **fiber:** whole-grain breads, waffles, and cereals; brown rice, bran, and other grains; fruits, vegetables, beans, and nuts

Here are some ideas for healthy breakfasts to try:

- whole-grain cereal with low-fat milk topped with fruit
- whole-grain waffles topped with peanut butter or ricotta cheese and fruit
- whole-wheat pita stuffed with sliced hard-cooked eggs
- hot cereal topped with nuts or fruit sprinkled with cinnamon, nutmeg, allspice, or cloves
- half a whole-grain bagel topped with peanut butter and fresh fruit (banana or apple wedges) and low-fat milk
- breakfast smoothie (low-fat milk or yogurt, fruit, and teaspoon of bran, whirled in a blender)
- vegetable omelet with whole-wheat toast
- bran muffin and berries
- sliced cucumbers and hummus in a whole-wheat pita
- lean turkey and tomato on a toasted English muffin
- heated leftover rice with chopped apples, nuts, and cinnamon
- low-fat cream cheese and fresh fruit, such as sliced strawberries, on whole-grain bread or half a whole-grain bagel
- shredded cheese on a whole-wheat tortilla, folded in half and microwaved for 20 seconds and topped with salsa

And don't forget how important your good example is. Let your kids see you making time to enjoy breakfast every day. Even if you just wash down some whole-wheat toast and a banana with a glass of juice or milk, you're showing how important it is to face the day only after refueling your brain and body with a healthy morning meal.

Reviewed by: Mary L. Gavin, MD

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Breakfast Basics

Post Test – March 2021

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1. Breakfast is a great way to give the body the _____ it needs.
2. Breakfast kick-starts the body's _____, the process by which the body converts the fuel in food to energy.
3. Choosing breakfast foods that are rich in whole grains, fiber and protein while low in added _____ may boost kid's attention span, concentration and memory.
4. Kids who eat breakfast are more likely to get fiber, calcium and other important _____.
5. Never allow children to help plan and prepare their own breakfasts.
True or False?
6. Many toaster pastries and breakfast bars have no more nutritional value than a candy bar and are high in sugar and _____.
7. Try to serve a _____ breakfast that includes some carbohydrates, protein and fiber.
8. Fiber helps provide a feeling of fullness and, therefore, discourages overeating.
True or False?
9. Good sources of _____ include low-fat or nonfat dairy products, lean meats, eggs, nuts (including nut butters), seeds and cooked dried beans.
10. When you set the example of eating a healthy breakfast you are showing how important it is to face the day only after refueling your _____ and _____ with a healthy morning meal.

February 2021 Quiz Answers. 1.Preparation 2.False 3.40° F/0° F 4.Separate
5.Bacteria 6.Raw 7.Thermometer 8.True 9.Paper Towels 10.Sanitize



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Elizabeth Curtis
Training Coordinator
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