

A Healthy Start to the Day

Eating breakfast is an important part of powering-up your body for the day. Eating a balanced breakfast can help keep your family alert, improve mood and reduce mid-morning food cravings.

Did you know?

- People who eat breakfast are significantly less likely to be obese and diabetic than those who usually don't.ⁱ
- Children who eat breakfast are more likely to have better concentration, problem-solving skills and hand-eye coordination.ⁱⁱ
- The State of Minnesota Breakfast Study showed that “students who ate breakfasts before starting school had a general increase in math grades and reading scores, increased student attention, reduced nurse visits, and improved student behaviors.”

Unfortunately, many breakfast foods contain a lot of sugar and have been stripped of their natural nutrients. Try to avoid frosted and chocolate cereals, donuts, white bread and high-sugar breakfast bars. Instead of sugary juices, provide your children with 100% fruit juices or fat-free or low-fat milk. Eating only sugary foods may cause your child to have erratic energy levels. Eating a balanced breakfast will help get them going and sustain their energy until lunch time.

A healthy breakfast does not have to take a lot of time. Stick to the basics and serve simple foods that are nutritious and quick in the morning. For ideas, follow our ten tips for nourishing ways to kick-start the day.

Ten Tips for a Healthier Breakfast:

1. **Oatmeal in an Instant**

Instant oatmeal is great on a cold morning and contains fiber and vitamins. Choose oatmeal that isn't already pre-sweetened. Sweeten it with raisins or fresh fruit.

2. **Smoothie madness**

Blend frozen fruit (bananas and berries are great), low-fat or fat-free milk, and 100% fruit-juice for a quick, tasty breakfast smoothie with lots of nutrients.

3. **Go 100% whole grain**

100% whole-grain, fiber-containing cereals served with low- or fat-free milk are a healthier alternative to sugary cereals. Whole-wheat muffins with smashed banana are easy and tasty as well.

4. **Eggxactly!**

Boil, scramble, or poach eggs and serve on whole-wheat toast - they're packed with nutrition and, in appropriate portions, are great for kids.

5. **Toaster Treats**

Frozen whole-grain waffles take almost no time to make. Top them with berries, low-sugar apple sauce or sliced bananas instead of syrup.

6. **Go Nutty!**

Spreading peanut or almond butter on whole-grain toast is a great to get both protein and fiber.

7. **Go Fruity**

A fresh fruit cut up with a dollop of low-fat or fat-free yogurt is a great way to start the day. Apples contain fiber and bananas contain potassium.

8. **Try All-Fruit Spreads**

Instead of butter or margarine on toast, try all-fruit spreads, fruit butters, or even sliced bananas or strawberries.

9. **Bagel Classics**

Try a whole-wheat or sunflower seed bagel with low-fat cream cheese or peanut butter.

10. **Breakfast On-the-Go**

Don't have time to eat breakfast at home? Keep whole-grain mini bagels on-hand or muffins, nuts and dried and fresh fruits that can be taken in the car (apple slices and bananas are also easy and not too messy!).

ⁱ <http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=3009715>

ⁱⁱ J. Michael Murphy, EdD; et al. , The Relationship of School Breakfast to Psychosocial and Academic Functioning - Cross-sectional and Longitudinal Observations in an Inner-city School Sample Arch Pediatr Adolesc Med. 1998;152:899-907.