



# A Healthy Breakfast - The best start to your day...



"Breakfast" literally means "breaking the fast". Breakfast helps top up the energy stores you have used up during the night whilst your body repairs and renews itself and also gives you mental and physical energy for your morning activities whether at work, school, home or out and about.

Breakfast is said to be the most important meal of the day, yet up to one third of us regularly miss this essential meal. We are all time pressured in the morning but in the time it takes to boil the kettle and make a hot drink, you could have eaten a bowl of wholegrain cereal with milk.

## Is breakfast really important then?

Yes. Apart from providing you with energy, a healthy breakfast gives you many other nutritional benefits. Breakfast can provide you with essential nutrients that the body needs such as fibre, vitamins and iron. It has been shown that people who eat breakfast have more balanced diets than those who skip this meal, are less likely to be overweight, lose weight more successfully and have reduced risk of certain diseases.

Missing breakfast may lead you to snack on less healthy foods later on in the morning and you won't necessarily catch up nutritionally later in the day if you skip breakfast. Other benefits of breakfast include improved health, improved mental performance and concentration and better mood - something we all want in the morning!

## What makes a healthy breakfast?

Breakfast should provide about 20%-25% (one fifth to one quarter) of your daily nutritional requirements. Breakfast based on the main food groups will give you an excellent start to the day:

**Bread, rice, potatoes, pasta and other starchy foods** - provide you with energy, B vitamins, some iron and fibre. Breakfast cereals, porridge, bread, rolls, English muffins, scones, malt loaf, fruit bread, currant bun and bagels are all good sources of energy that will help kick start your metabolism and they're all low in fat too. Choose wholegrain varieties whenever possible to ensure a good fibre intake and try to avoid cereals coated in sugar.

**Fruit and vegetables** - are good sources of vitamins and fibre. Breakfast is a perfect time to include at least one of the recommended 5 portions a day of fruit and vegetables. A glass of pure fruit juice counts as one for a start.



Have chopped fresh fruit like a banana or some dried or stewed or tinned (in juice) fruit on your cereal, half a grapefruit or fruit salad. For something different, try a fresh fruit smoothie - fruit blended with low fat yogurt or milk.



Frozen berries or fruit in season in the market or ripe fruit (look for it reduced in price at the supermarket) are ideal.



**Milk and dairy foods** - give you protein, calcium and B vitamins. Calcium is essential to keep your bones strong and healthy whatever your age, and a serving of milk on your cereal can give you up to one third of your daily calcium requirement.



Use low fat milks like skimmed, semi-skimmed and 1%. If you don't have cereal, drink a glass of milk on its own or as a milkshake/smoothie, or have a pot of low fat yogurt instead or low fat cheese on toast. Natural yoghurt is delicious topped with fruit and a sprinkle of muesli.



If you use milk, and other products not made from cow's milk make sure they are fortified with calcium.

**Meat, fish, eggs, beans and other non-dairy sources of protein** - give you protein, iron and vitamins. These foods are not essential at breakfast but can add variety. Try not to have them every day and avoid high fat foods such as fried sausages, fried bacon, fried eggs. Choose cooking methods such as grilling or poaching instead of adding fat. Grilled bacon with the fat trimmed, poached, boiled or scrambled eggs, baked beans or a grilled kipper are healthier options.

Foods and drinks high in fat and sugar give you energy but are low in vitamins, minerals and other nutrients. Try to keep these foods to a minimum. Go for polyunsaturated or mono-unsaturated low fat spreads where possible, not dairy based spreads, but spread thinly. Avoid sugar-coated cereals, fizzy drinks, biscuits and crisps at breakfast and use fruit to add natural sweetness instead of sugar on your cereal. Remember to include a drink. Water, milk, pure fruit juice, tea and coffee all supply vital fluids. Use low fat milks like 1% and ask for 'skinny' coffee. Being well hydrated also means you can concentrate better.

If you can't face eating first thing try and eat within two hours of getting up. Keep some healthy wholegrain cereal at work or if you are breakfasting on the go, choose a shop, café or sandwich bar that has healthy choices like wholegrain toast or cereal, porridge, low fat yoghurts, pure fruit juices, fresh fruit salads and smoothies and ask for 'skinny' coffee. Keep pastries and croissants as an occasional treat not an every day eat. It's better to eat something than nothing so make sure you have things to hand you can grab like a banana, fruit salad,



yoghurt with muesli on those mornings when you are in a spin. Find out if your school has a breakfast club. At home, lay the table buffet style (get the children to help and do the night before if necessary) and get the children to serve themselves.

Follow this example meal plan and see just how easy it is to eat breakfast:

• Bowl of fortified wholegrain cereal with semi-skimmed/skimmed/1% milk

• Fruit (fresh/tinned in juice/dried/frozen)

## Follow this example meal plan and see just how easy it is to eat breakfast:

- Glass of pure, unsweetened fruit juice
- Wholegrain toast with polyunsaturated or mono-unsaturated low fat spread or wholegrain bread or rolls or wholegrain English muffins or malt loaf or fruit bread or currant bun or bagels



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