



What's for breakfast? Can eating breakfast really improve test scores?

Breakfast Helps You Make the Grade

Students who eat a healthy breakfast tend to show improved academic performance. Research shows that students who eat breakfast have:

- ❖ *greater attention spans,*
- ❖ *improved concentration*
- ❖ *perform better on spatial and cognitive tests.*

Breakfast literally means “break the fast.” By the time breakfast rolls around, many people have gone 8-12 hours without eating. By eating breakfast, you will have energy throughout the morning to better concentrate in class. Breakfast makes an important contribution to both the mind and body, yet it is the most frequently skipped meal. Breakfast eaters have better school attendance and are less apt to show up tardy. Breakfast skippers are more likely to get stomach pains and headaches caused by hunger, which could make learning and test-taking challenging.

Problems with skipping breakfast

Between 10%-30% of people head out the door in the morning with a low tank of gas, because they have not eaten. This habit gets worse with age and is more prevalent in females. In fact by the time a teen reaches high school, 59% of them will skip breakfast more than three times per week!

If eating breakfast is new to you, give your body a couple of weeks to get adjusted if you are a breakfast skipper. The key to fitting in a healthy breakfast is to plan ahead. *Common excuses for skipping breakfast include: “I have to run or I will be late.” “I am just not hungry that early in the morning.” “I don’t like breakfast foods”*

Helping the body

Breakfast eaters are healthier. They are more likely to meet the nutritional recommendations for their age groups, especially for vitamins A, C, riboflavin, calcium, zinc, iron, and fiber. Breakfast skippers have higher cholesterol levels, which can increase their risk for heart disease

Helping athletes

Breakfast eaters have better hand-eye coordination, which is a critical element of success in many sports. Skipping meals causes the body to rely on glycogen storage in the liver and muscle for energy. To train and perform your best, you need both the energy from food and that which is already stored in the muscle. That is why it is especially important for athletes who train in the morning to eat breakfast.

Breakfast ideas:

A healthy breakfast should include foods from a variety of food groups, such as whole grains, fruit, and dairy, to ensure that you get a good mix of both nutrients and fiber. A nutritious breakfast includes foods from at least three food groups:

Fruit group - fresh whole fruit such as bananas, apples, oranges. Sliced fruit which can be added to cereal, muffins, yogurt or oatmeal. Limiting juice is a good strategy to eat more fruits.

Vegetables group- tomato juice, or adding mushrooms, onions, peppers to eggs is a good way to add veggies at breakfast.

Grains group - whole grain breads, dry cereal, bagels, toast, biscuits, english muffins, muffins

Milk group – Choosing low fat dairy products is a great way to promote moderate intake of calories.

Meat and meat alternates – eggs, Canadian ham, yogurt, cottage cheese, peanut butter, sliced cheese, nuts, sliced turkey . Sausage and bacon is considered a fat despite in the South we consider it a breakfast meat.

Try these breakfast ideas, which can help you become a healthier individual, better student, and more energized

- Ready-to-eat cereal
- Hot cereal
- Bagel with low-fat cream cheese or peanut butter
- Yogurt with sliced fruit
- Fruited low-fat muffin or bread
- Fruit and yogurt smoothie
- Peanut butter or hummus on whole-wheat toast
- Cheese pizza
- Breakfast quesadilla with low-fat cream cheese and sliced fruit
- Breakfast burrito or taco
- Toasted whole-wheat English muffin with lean ham and low-fat cheese
- Toasted pita with scrambled egg and low-fat cheese
- Low-fat milk and 100% fruit

The Food Pyramid Guide, suggests provides general guidelines regarding what children should eat; food consumption and nutrient requirements are dependent on age, gender, and activity. Check out the food pyramid for children at http://teamnnutrition.usda.gov/Resources/mpk_poster2.pdf.

Use this handy guide to know exactly what your child should eat. More information is available at www.myfoodpyramid.gov.



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Coordinated School Health is excited to offer free nutrition advice from a registered dietitian and licensed nutritionist for school employees.

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