

# Breakfast

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Breakfast is the most important meal of the day. Studies show that children and adults who eat breakfast work more efficiently. Those who skip breakfast become tired, irritable and react slower than those who eat breakfast.

## Fuel for the body

Think of your body as an engine. Food's nutrients and calories fuel your body just like gasoline fuels a vehicle. After an overnight fast of eight to 12 hours, your brain needs fuel for energy. Skipping breakfast leaves your brain without fuel, making it difficult to concentrate and solve problems.

## Skip the excuses

Common excuses for skipping breakfast include:

- ◆ Lack of time
- ◆ Not liking breakfast foods
- ◆ Weight loss

But there is no good excuse not to eat breakfast. Eating in the morning gets your motor running and helps you become a role model for others.

## Why eat breakfast?

- ◆ To break the fast — your body needs fuel after an overnight fast.
- ◆ For nutrients — eating breakfast helps supply your daily nutrients.
- ◆ For learning — eating breakfast primes your brain for problem solving, concentrating and memorizing.
- ◆ For weight control — eating breakfast makes you less likely to overeat later in the day. Skipping breakfast has been linked to obesity.

## Breakfast tips

Make small changes to your morning routine. If you're not a breakfast eater, start by adding a glass of milk or a piece of fruit.



- ◆ It's all about balance — enjoy bacon and eggs one day and a bowl of oatmeal topped with raisins and fat-free milk the next.
- ◆ Try nontraditional breakfast foods, like pasta or crackers with cheese.
- ◆ Enjoy all foods in moderation. If you like sugar-coated cereal, mix it with whole-grain cereal.

## Smart choices

It is always good to eat something in the morning, but a breakfast that contains a variety of nutrients is best. Choose foods from several food groups to give you a variety of vitamins and minerals that will sustain you until lunch.

## Breakfast Smoothie

Servings: 2

### Ingredients

- ½ cup vanilla yogurt
- ½ cup apple or orange juice
- 1 very ripe banana, halved
- 2½ to 5 cups of strawberries

### Directions

Place ingredients in blender and blend until smooth. Pour into two glasses. A teaspoon of wheat germ or bran may be added for extra fiber.



Breakfast should provide about 30 percent of your calories and nutrients for the day. Choose foods high in iron, like whole and enriched grains, and cereals, raisins, prunes and dried apricots.

Some nontraditional breakfast foods that are high in iron include nuts, dark green leafy vegetables, meat, poultry and fish. Vitamin C improves your body's absorption of vitamins and minerals. Try to drink orange juice, which is rich in vitamin C, instead of coffee or soda with your breakfast. On those rushed mornings when you may have to grab a breakfast bar or toaster pastry, be sure to include milk or juice to boost your breakfast's nutritional value.

### Fast, easy and nutrient-packed breakfast ideas:

- ◆ Whole-grain cereal topped with a banana and low-fat milk
- ◆ Peanut butter rolled in a tortilla and a cup of 100 percent juice

- ◆ Smoothie with low-fat milk, fruit and bran
- ◆ Oatmeal sprinkled with raisins and nuts
- ◆ Low-fat yogurt topped with granola and fruit
- ◆ Bagel spread with low-fat cream cheese and topped with sliced fruit
- ◆ Trail mix made with your favorite cereal, nuts and dried fruit
- ◆ Boiled egg, fresh fruit and an English muffin
- ◆ Whole-grain toast topped with scrambled eggs and salsa
- ◆ Leftovers from last night's dinner and a glass of low-fat milk
- ◆ Breakfast Smoothie (see recipe above)

Adapted from "Nutrient Packed Breakfast Ideas" by Sarah Janicek, Greta Hopke, RD, and Candance Gabel, MS, RD, LD; and "Breakfast Basics," "Get Your Motor Running," "Breakfast Questions" and "Pump Iron," all written by Amanda Stevens and Candance Gabel, MS, RD, LD, University of Missouri Extension.