

The Importance of Starting Your Day with Breakfast

Everyone knows that breakfast is one of the most important meals of the day. To "break a fast" means to end a long period when someone hasn't taken in any food, such as when they have slept all night. Starting the day without breakfast is like driving a car without stopping to fill up the gas tank. When you get up in the morning, your glucose or blood sugar level is at its lowest point in the day. Glucose is the basic fuel for the brain and central nervous system. A good breakfast will keep you from being tired and irritable by mid-morning. The effects of a skipped breakfast are short attention span, lack of alertness, longer reaction time, low blood sugar, decreased work productivity. Take time to eat a large, balanced breakfast. It's a good investment of your time. Once you get into the habit of eating breakfast, you may feel hungry in the morning.

The importance of a healthy breakfast

Many people underestimate the value of breakfast. They may only have a glass of juice or a cup of coffee and eat nothing at all. However, research has shown that this type of routine is not the best habit to get into. Eating a substantial meal within the first few hours of waking up is much healthier for you and your child. 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. Research also has shown that kids who eat breakfast get fiber, calcium, and other important nutrients.

What's your excuse for not eating breakfast?

- "No time?" Make toast and eat it on your way to work. Make your breakfast the night before. Making time for breakfast is making time to be healthy.
- "Not hungry?" To get started, don't eat anything after an early supper.
- "Might gain weight?" Eating breakfast will actually help you reach and maintain your healthy weight. Your appetite will be satisfied longer. You'll be eating food when you can best burn the calories. You'll feel great.
- You "don't like breakfast foods?" You can eat leftovers, or a sandwich. Any healthy food is fine. Caffeine may mask hunger.
- You "don't like eating breakfast?" It is in your best interest to eat breakfast. Take the step. Do the right thing.

And remember, Health is by Choice...not by chance! The choice is yours. You don't have to be a statistic. By adopting a better diet and wiser lifestyle habits, you can live longer, feel better, and enjoy a healthier, more productive life.

By Dee Madore, *Registered Dietitian*