

Feed Your Brain: Eat Breakfast!

You know those mornings when you sleep through the alarm, stub your toe on the bed, get shampoo in your eyes, and then put your shirt on backwards as you rush to get ready? You may feel like skipping breakfast when you're running late, but it'll only make your day worse.

Think about the length of time your body runs without fuel overnight. This is a 'fasting period' for your body and you're breaking the fast' when you finally eat. But, if you don't eat breakfast, your body goes without energy. By getting some food into your stomach, your blood sugar rises, which makes you feel more energetic, alert, and less cranky (breakfast may stop you from snapping at your boyfriend or girlfriend). If you think you're doing yourself a favour by skipping breakfast – think again! Skipping breakfast means your body won't burn calories as effectively throughout the day, and you'll just be hungrier later.

By starting your day off with something to eat, you're giving yourself and your brain a head start. Studies show that people who eat breakfast before going to school have:



- * increased accuracy
- * better memory
- * higher attention spans (yes, even in the boring classes)

You know the feeling of being in class after skipping breakfast and hearing your stomach start to rumble? You try desperately to hide the echoing beast inside while wishing there was more noise surrounding you. The embarrassing noises are bad enough, but you find you can't stop thinking about food! Besides not paying attention, you feel like you could eat just about anything. And where does that usually lead? Straight to the vending machine or cafeteria to buy a bag of chips, a pastry, or some other tempting treat! The convenience food you crave most likely contains more calories, fat and salt than your body really needs. You should have eaten a healthy breakfast before those cravings kicked in!

A well-balanced healthy breakfast includes three of the four food groups: milk & milk products, grains, vegetables & fruit, and meat & alternatives. Something as simple as a multigrain bagel with peanut butter and fruit juice easily meets the criteria.

BONE UP ON CALCIUM

Which of the following apply to you? Do you have:

- blonde hair
- fair skin
- blue eyes
- slight frame
- daily pop &/or caffeine
- a non-active lifestyle

If so, read on, because you're at greater risk for developing brittle bones (osteoporosis) and you should try and add some milk products to your breakfast routine. Foods like milk, yogurt and cheese are easy on-the-go snacks, not to mention a good source of bone-building calcium. Try some of the lower fat milk products – most cut out a lot of fat and calories, and still taste great (especially the chocolate milk). Or, whip up the breakfast smoothie recipe on this page to get your calcium along with an energy boost.

KICK START YOUR DAY WITH ENERGY FROM CARBS

To fulfill your “get up and go!” requirements base your breakfast on grain products such as bread, bagels, pita bread, cold or hot cereal, English muffins, waffles, muffins or cereal bars. Because they contain B vitamins, these complex carbohydrates will help your body release energy and get your brain started.

If you're trying to watch your weight, grain products can help you. Choose whole grain or higher-fiber foods (think whole wheat instead of white), and they'll help you feel fuller for longer!

REACH FOR FIVE A DAY

True or False? Brighter and darker coloured produce has more vitamins

This is true, although it may sound like a myth. For the most part, the darker the fruit or veggie, the more vitamins it contains. Although handfuls of dark spinach may not be a tempting option for breakfast, fruit salad with a dollop of yogurt, or baby carrots with dip are easy and delicious.

Ideally, you should have a minimum of five vegetables and fruits per day. That may seem like a lot if you're not into salad, but an easy way to fit them into your day is to have fruit at each meal, and a serving of vegetables at lunch and dinner. (Remember – a ½ cup of juice counts as a serving).

FEELING LAZY OR SLOW?

Have you been dragging yourself lately, or find you're falling asleep in class? It may partly be because you watched way too much of that dumb movie last night, but it may also be that you're not getting enough protein. Protein from meat and poultry helps keep your brain active and alert. Meat products are also an important source of iron. If your body doesn't get enough iron, you will get that weak, slow and draggy feeling. So if it's hard to get out of bed day after day, try having an egg, or some ham slices with your breakfast, and you may start to feel more alert. Beans, peanut butter, tofu or nuts make good substitutes if you're not a big meat eater.

BREAKFAST TO GO

By now you should be sold on eating breakfast every day. Try these simple food ideas for a quick and convenient, but healthy, breakfast:

- a tortilla wrap with peanut butter and banana and a container of juice
- an oatmeal raisin muffin, yogurt and a container of juice
- a cereal bar, a container of chocolate milk and an apple
- an individual cereal box, container of milk and a banana
- a toaster pastry, a container of juice, and an orange
- a 7-grain bagel with cheese and vegetable juice

You don't have to eat a "typical" breakfast food for your morning meal to be healthy and balanced. And there will always be times when you just can't squeeze in breakfast. But, if you normally choose a variety of healthy foods for breakfast, you'll be able to start your day off right, with more fiber, vitamins and minerals. Eating breakfast every day won't make algebra class any shorter, or your English text any less snooze-worthy. But, by fueling your body and feeding your brain, you may find that learning becomes just a little bit easier.

ENERGY BOOSTING SMOOTHIE RECIPE

An easy way to incorporate a serving of dairy and fruit for breakfast is drinking an 'energy boosting' smoothie. Blend together the following ingredients till frothy, and then enjoy it with a muffin as you run out the door.



- an individual pack of any flavour yogurt
- a ½ cup of ice
- a ½ cup of juice
- a ½ cup of fresh or frozen fruit