



Breaking for Breakfast

Skipping breakfast — how bad can it be, really? Pretty bad ... for real. It turns out that skipping breakfast can make you gain weight because you end up snacking and eating larger meals later in the day. More than that, it can temporarily dumb you down. It's true. A respected European study showed better performance and cognitive ability in people who ate carbohydrates with protein for breakfast. Other studies have shown that brain function in children who skip breakfast is drastically reduced by late morning.

And no, that muffin on the way out the door doesn't count as breakfast. We're talking a real breakfast here, with proteins and carbs, one that will stick to your ribs until lunch or later. So, like your mother said, breakfast really is important.

Skipping breakfast (or eating a poor one) can also lower your metabolic rate — your body has to compensate somehow for the lack of fuel, which means you will burn fewer calories throughout the day. Plus, children who eat breakfast are more likely to get the vitamins and minerals they need and be more emotionally stable and mentally alert.

Okay, so breakfast is important, but what kind of breakfast is best? One that's balanced with good carbohydrates, good fats and protein. The ideal breakfast should have lots of fiber and whole grains, some protein and good fat, and as

little added sugar as possible. Here's a breakdown:

Good carbs include whole grain cereals, breads and pancakes topped with berries, fruit or nuts. Accompany them with a variety of non-sweetened fruit juices, naturally flavored, unsweetened milks and yogurts.

Bad carbs are foods such as donuts, white bread, sugary cereals, and high-sugar jams, jellies and syrups. Avoid sugary products in general along with those that contain high fructose corn syrup. After ten or twelve hours of fasting, the body is particularly sensitive to sugars, which is why they should be avoided at breakfast.

Protein

- Eggs, cooked any way you like them (hard-boiled eggs are easy to have around for a quick protein boost)
- Unsweetened yogurt or cottage cheese with berries
- Refried beans spread on whole grain toast or tortillas
- Nut butters
- Burritos with eggs or beans and cheese on whole grain tortillas
- All types of natural meat, such as breakfast steaks, lean pork chops or turkey bacon
- Hummus on whole grain or corn tortillas
- Add nuts to oatmeal, yogurt and hot or cold cereal
- Scrambled tofu
- Cheese sticks with fruit
- Cream cheese on whole grain crackers

Breakfast, like all meals, should be about wholesome food, not empty calories. Give yourself and your family a daily gift that keeps on giving all morning long — a good, nutritious breakfast. It will definitely make them healthier and probably smarter too.