

Tips for Better Breakfasts

Research shows that breaking an overnight fast with a balanced meal can make a significant difference in overall health and well-being, in particular for children and teens. Eating a smart breakfast can help improve behavior and school performance, as well as foster a healthy weight. On the other hand, skipping breakfast is a no-brainer, quite literally. When children skip breakfast, their brains and bodies suffer all day.

We all experience "morning madness" — whether it's a time crunch, a picky eater or lack of appetite in the morning, many things can keep you from making it out the door on time.

The good news is that healthy breakfast options are available no matter what morning hurdles you face.

Quick Breakfast Fix: Running low on time? Here are speedy breakfast ideas to get you and your family out the door and ready for your day.

- Mix low-fat yogurt with whole-grain cereal and serve with a glass of orange juice.
- Blend low-fat milk, frozen strawberries and a banana for a 30-second smoothie to enjoy with a bran muffin.
- Add dried cranberries and almonds to quick-cooking oatmeal.
- Prepare fresh vegetable omelets or frittatas ahead of time to reheat all week long.
- Get organized the night before and make a breakfast plan as you clean up from dinner. Set the table with bowls and spoons for cereal. Take out a pan for pancakes or a blender for smoothies.

Pack your breakfast to go. If there's no time to eat at home, plan a nutritious option to eat later that morning. Busy teens can grab a banana, a bag of trail mix made with whole-grain cereal, shelled pistachios and a favorite dried fruit (try diced apricot, pineapple or mango).

Picky Eater: Do your children demand certain foods every morning? You can make subtle changes to give their traditional breakfasts a nutritional boost.

- **Doughnuts:** Offer whole-grain toaster waffles or pancakes with reduced-sugar syrup. If you're serving doughnuts, consider offering doughnut holes and add other foods such as low-fat milk and fruit to ensure some extra nutrition.
- **Banana Dog:** Spread a couple of tablespoons of peanut or almond butter on a whole-grain hot dog bun. Peel a banana, place inside the bun and eat it like a hot dog. Pair this with low-fat or fat-free milk.
- **Bacon:** Switch to turkey bacon, which is much lower in fat than traditional bacon.
- **Toast with peanut butter:** Use whole-grain toast to boost fiber and use peanut butter for a morning protein boost instead of butter or jam. Add a glass of low-fat milk or orange juice.
- **Sugary cereals:** Substitute low-sugar, whole-grain cereals and pair with fresh or frozen berries.
- **Fresh fruit:** bananas, kiwi, pears, apples, mangoes, melon, grapefruit or whatever is in season.
- **"Dinner Foods":** The best breakfast for kids is the breakfast they'll eat, and they certainly don't need to be traditional breakfast foods. Offer leftovers, a quesadilla or cheese and crackers.

Lack of Appetite: Many kids say they just don't feel like eating when they get up. If this is true for your child, here are some things you can do:

- Spread it out: Have your child eat a piece of fruit and drink a glass of low-fat milk before they leave the house. Then, when they get to school, they can have a small snack; such as an oatmeal muffin or a low-sugar breakfast bar.
- Eat breakfast at school: Many schools serve a variety of nutritious breakfasts for kids. If this is available in your area, encourage your children to take advantage of these options.
- Make it easily accessible: Put breakfast fixings in an easy-to-grab place. Put the cereal on a lower shelf in the pantry so younger kids can reach it easily, and place fruit in a bowl on the counter where kids (and parents) can easily grab something nutritious on their way out the door.
- Be a good role model: If your child sees you making time to eat a healthy meal, they'll be more likely to follow your healthy example.

With these easy and family-friendly healthy breakfast tips, you can help your family rise, shine and get ready for a busy day.