



What makes a good breakfast



What we choose to eat for breakfast is important, potentially affecting our mental and physical performance throughout the day, as well as our mood, weight and long-term health. A good breakfast gives us the energy we need to face the day, as well as some of the vitamins and minerals we need for good health. Research shows that eating first thing in the morning helps to stabilise blood sugar levels, which control appetite and energy.

It's generally accepted that around 20% of the day's calorie intake should be eaten at breakfast time – that's around 400 calories for women and 500 calories for men. Having a combination of starchy food, fibre and protein is the best idea.

“Breakfast like a king, lunch like a prince and dine like a pauper”

Starchy foods

Breakfast should include starchy food as this provides us with energy, B vitamins, iron and fibre. Breakfast cereals, porridge, bread, rolls, English muffins, scones, malt loaf, fruit bread, currant buns and bagels are all good sources of energy that will help you kick-start your metabolism and they're all low in fat too. A bowl of breakfast cereal with milk also provides at least 25% of daily requirements for many essential vitamins and 17% for iron.

Fruit and vegetables

Fruit and vegetables are good sources of vitamins and fibre. Breakfast is a perfect time to include at least one of the recommended five portions a day of fruit and vegetables. A glass of pure fruit juice counts as one for a start. You could also think about adding fresh, tinned or dried fruit to your cereal or maybe having an apple, a banana, half a grapefruit or a fruit salad on the side.

Dairy foods

Milk and dairy foods give you protein, calcium and B vitamins. Calcium is essential to keep your bones strong and healthy whatever your age and a serving of milk on a bowl of cereal can give you up to one third of your daily calcium requirement.

Use low-fat milks like skimmed, semi-skimmed or 1% on your cereal. If you don't have cereal for breakfast, drink a glass of milk on its own or as a milkshake or smoothie.

You could also have a pot of low-fat yoghurt or low-fat cheese on toast. Natural yoghurt is delicious when you top it with some fruit and a handful of muesli. If you use milk and other products not made from cow's milk, make sure they are fortified with calcium to get the benefits.

Meat, fish, eggs and other non-dairy sources of protein

These foods can add variety to your breakfast. They tend to be good sources of protein, iron and vitamins. Oily fish such as kippers are a great source of omega 3 and breakfast can be a great time to get in one of your recommended 2-4 portions a week. Try not to have meat and fish every day and avoid high fat cooking methods, such as frying. Trim off any visible fat or skin from meat and go for leaner cuts.

What to drink

Don't forget to drink fruit juice as this will also help towards your five a day and is a tasty and pleasant start to the day. However, it's important to remember that however much fruit juice you drink, it only counts as a maximum of one fruit and vegetable portion a day and smoothies contribute up to two portions.

Alternatively, drink water with your breakfast or have a smoothie. They are another great way to start your day. Simply put your favourite fruits into a food processor and blend into a puree. Add milk, water or yoghurt. This breakfast choice is quick, tasty and good for you.