



## breakfast – it matters!

**Many nutrition experts consider breakfast to be the most important meal of the day. After 10 to 12 hours without food, our energy reserves are low and our brains and bodies need fuel. What we choose to eat at breakfast can affect our mental and physical performance, as well as our mood, weight and long-term health.**

### Brighter after breakfast

Several studies have shown that children who skip breakfast in the morning perform less well in problem-solving tasks. More than 1300 children took part in an online study as part of Farmhouse Breakfast Week 2004. The results show that children who eat breakfast have superior cognitive function, pay more attention and respond more quickly to given tasks.

But it is not just children who perform better if they eat a healthy breakfast. Studies show that adults who eat breakfast tend to work faster, make fewer mistakes in logic tests and have better memory recall than breakfast skippers.

### Stress-busting breakfast

It is not just our mental performance that suffers if we skip breakfast. Research suggests that breakfast eaters are less likely to suffer from colds and 'flu and are less likely to describe themselves as being stressed or depressed.



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### Shaping up

Breakfast is also important for anyone trying to stay in shape or lose weight. If we miss breakfast, we are much more likely to become hungry mid-morning and grab a snack that is high in calories and fat but low in nutrients and fibre.

Children who regularly eat a cereal-based breakfast are healthier and less likely to be overweight. In fact, teenagers who eat breakfast cereals more than five times a week are more likely to weigh less, have a smaller waist size and lower blood sugar levels than those who rarely eat cereal (6). Research shows that adults who eat breakfast are less likely to be overweight.

### The breakfast boost

Breakfast also provides an important boost to our intake of vitamins, minerals and fibre: studies show that it can be difficult to make up on these nutrients later in the day. People who eat breakfast are more likely to meet the recommended daily intake of iron, calcium and B group vitamins.

### What's best for breakfast?

Breakfast is the ideal time to choose wholegrain foods.

- Cereals: Check the nutrition information on the label and choose a cereal that provides at least 3g fibre per serving. Use skimmed or semi skimmed milk. A small glass of orange juice helps the body absorb the iron from cereals.
- Toast: Choose wholemeal or granary bread: slice for slice, wholemeal bread contains almost four times as much fibre, over three times as much zinc and almost twice as much iron as white bread. Levels of B vitamins are also significantly higher. Spread any butter or margarine thinly. If opting for jam or marmalade, go for reduced sugar varieties.

For references please see our website.

### Breakfast on the run

Making time for breakfast does not have to mean missing precious time in bed. It only takes a few moments to pour some milk over a bowl of wholegrain cereal. If time is really short, be super-organised and get out a bowl, a spoon and packet of cereal before bedtime. If there's really no time to eat before leaving home, grab a healthy snack on the way to work.



### Try these healthy alternatives

*Cereal/muesli bar*

*Banana*

*Wholemeal muffin or scone*

*Cinnamon bagel spread with peanut butter*

*Yoghurt*

*Smoothie*

*Low fat wholemeal sandwich*

*Ready-to-eat dried fruit and nuts or trail mix*



**Wholegrain Goodness**  
[www.wholegraingoodness.co.uk](http://www.wholegraingoodness.co.uk)

**Breakfast Week**  
[www.hgca.com/breakfast](http://www.hgca.com/breakfast)

**British Dietetic Association**  
[www.bda.uk.com](http://www.bda.uk.com)

**British Nutrition Foundation**  
[www.nutrition.org.uk](http://www.nutrition.org.uk)

*Topic sheets are free to download from our website.*

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