



ASK THE DIETITIAN

Breakfast Basics

Q. I am not hungry right when I wake up, is it okay to wait to eat breakfast?

A. You should try to eat within an hour or so of waking. After not eating for 8 or more hours breakfast is needed to break the fast and provide energy to start your day. Not eating late in the evening may help you feel hungrier in the morning. If you are still not hungry try to at least eat something small like whole-wheat toast and a glass of orange juice. Once you eat a little something you may find that you are actually hungry. As you get in the habit of eating when you wake up it should become easier to do so.

Q. I don't have time to eat breakfast; can't I just eat more at lunch?

A. It is important find a few extra minutes for breakfast. Skipping breakfast can lead to low energy levels, poor concentration, and decreased work or school performance. Eating a healthy breakfast sets the tone for the entire day. If you wait until lunch to eat you will be more likely to make poor food choices and eat more calories, and fat overall. Eating in the morning can help you meet your requirements for important nutrients such as calcium, vitamin D, vitamin C, magnesium, and fiber. Breakfast can be as simple as a bowl of whole-grain cereal and a piece of fruit.

Q. I usually get my breakfast on the way to work, are there any healthy options available at convenience stores or quick-serve restaurants?

A. Most convenience stores offer lots of different choices that can be nutritious such as breakfast sandwiches, whole-wheat bagels, low-fat yogurt and yogurt smoothies, fresh fruit, whole-grain breakfast bars and cereal, and even oatmeal. Looking for foods that are low in fat and sugar, and that have a good amount of fiber and other nutrients will help you make the best choices on-the-go.

Our dietitians receive hundreds of questions each year about a wide variety of nutrition topics. Their timely and trustworthy insights and ideas can help you and your family live healthier lives. Since everyone's health history and nutritional needs are so different, please make sure that you talk with your own doctor and registered dietitian to get advice about the diet and exercise plan that's right for you.



ASK THE DIETITIAN

Breakfast Basics

Q. I have trouble getting my kids to eat breakfast, what are some ways I can improve their morning eating habits?

A. It is very important for kids to eat breakfast. Studies show that kids who eat breakfast perform better in school, are less likely to be overweight, and have higher intakes of important nutrients like fiber, calcium, and protein. Get your kids into the habit by setting a specific time each day for breakfast. You can also have them help you prepare breakfast. If there is not much time in the morning, set the table for breakfast the night before and have your child choose what they will have in advance. You can also keep a variety of quick healthy foods available such as ready-to-eat whole-grain cereal, cut-up fruit, yogurt, frozen whole-grain waffles, cereal bars, and even string cheese.

Q. I know I should eat in the morning but I don't really like many breakfast foods, what other options are there?

A. Breakfast can include any foods that you enjoy. Breakfast is best when it includes foods from a variety of food groups so it should be easy for you to find foods you enjoy. Try to pick combinations that include whole-grains, fruits, low-fat dairy and lean protein. A sandwich with an apple or a slice of leftover pizza with fruit salad can provide a nutritious breakfast.

Q. I am trying to lose weight; won't skipping breakfast help me reduce my overall calories?

A. People who are most successful at losing weight and keeping it off eat breakfast daily. Skipping meals is not the best way to lose weight because it may cause you to binge on food later in the day which could add on extra calories. Eating breakfast is also a way to jump-start your metabolism and provide you with energy for your day. People who eat breakfast also tend to be more active in general. This may be because they have greater energy to perform activities. The healthiest way to lose weight is to eat many small healthy meals throughout the day within your calorie limit and exercise regularly.

Our dietitians receive hundreds of questions each year about a wide variety of nutrition topics. Their timely and trustworthy insights and ideas can help you and your family live healthier lives. Since everyone's health history and nutritional needs are so different, please make sure that you talk with your own doctor and registered dietitian to get advice about the diet and exercise plan that's right for you.



ASK THE DIETITIAN

Breakfast Basics

Q. I am tired of eating cereal or toast everyday for breakfast, what are some other healthy meal ideas?

A. There are many different foods you can eat for breakfast; you just have to think outside the cereal box. Try making an egg and cheese breakfast burrito topped with veggies in a whole-wheat wrap. Make a refreshing smoothie with fresh fruit and yogurt. Put together mini pizzas on a whole-wheat English muffin topped with tomato sauce and low-fat mozzarella cheese. Whole-wheat bagels with low-fat flavored cream cheese are another option. You can even eat foods that are not typically considered for breakfast. Many other cultures eat vegetables, rice, and even fish for breakfast.

Q. I eat breakfast on most days but why do I get hungrier on the days that I eat breakfast?

A. If you are eating mainly refined carbohydrates for breakfast like sugary cereal or white toast in the morning it may be the reason you get hungrier than usual. By eating you are jump starting your metabolism and digestive system, however, refined carbs are quickly digested and absorbed, and leave you feeling hungry after a short period of time. To prevent this you should try to eat a balanced breakfast that includes carbs that contain fiber like oatmeal, fruit, or whole-grain breads and cereals, as well as foods with some protein, like eggs, and low-fat milk or yogurt. These foods are digested more slowly and can keep you satisfied longer. Try oatmeal made with low-fat milk and topped with pecans or walnuts.

Q. I heard that juice is not good to drink at breakfast because it is loaded with sugar, should I avoid it?

A. A glass of 100% juice with breakfast can be a healthy addition to your meal. Most 100% juices are high in vitamin C and some are fortified with other nutrients such as vitamin D and calcium. As long as the juice says 100%, there should not be any added sugar. 100% juice does contain fructose, which is naturally occurring sugar, so you don't want to overdo it. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends limiting fruit juice for children 1-6 years old to no more than 6 ounces daily and only 8-12 ounces for older children. If you want a better alternative try eating the whole fruit instead. It will have fewer calories and more fiber than its juice counterpart.

Our dietitians receive hundreds of questions each year about a wide variety of nutrition topics. Their timely and trustworthy insights and ideas can help you and your family live healthier lives. Since everyone's health history and nutritional needs are so different, please make sure that you talk with your own doctor and registered dietitian to get advice about the diet and exercise plan that's right for you.



ASK THE DIETITIAN

Breakfast Basics

Q. I workout in the morning, is it better to eat breakfast before or after?

A. Eating before a workout is important even if it is only a small amount. When you wake it is possible that you have not eaten for 8-12 hours and the body has depleted most of its energy stores. It is important to eat breakfast so that you can refuel your body and have enough stamina for your workout. Eating breakfast can help you work out longer and harder than if you did it on an empty stomach and can help prevent low blood sugar levels which may cause dizziness and nausea. The best breakfast choice before a workout is one that contains a moderate amount of carbohydrates. Try a mini-whole wheat bagel and a banana. It is also important to drink water before, during, and after your workout because many people are somewhat dehydrated when they wake up.

Q. I heard that eating oatmeal can lower my cholesterol, is this true?

A. Over the years numerous studies have been done on this topic and have concluded that eating oatmeal (3/4 cup dry, 1 ½ cooked) daily can help reduce cholesterol and reduce risk for heart disease. Oats are high in both soluble and insoluble fiber. Soluble fiber is responsible for reducing cholesterol by binding to it and removing it from the body. You can mix things up by topping your oatmeal with fresh or dried fruit, nuts, yogurt, honey, or cinnamon.

Our dietitians receive hundreds of questions each year about a wide variety of nutrition topics. Their timely and trustworthy insights and ideas can help you and your family live healthier lives. Since everyone's health history and nutritional needs are so different, please make sure that you talk with your own doctor and registered dietitian to get advice about the diet and exercise plan that's right for you.