

A Guide for making healthier choices

FOUNDATION STRATEGY # 7 – EAT BREAKFAST

THEY DON'T CALL IT THE MOST IMPORTANT MEAL OF THE DAY FOR NOTHING, YOU KNOW?

The word breakfast is actually 2 words – "break" and "fast." The word "fast" can mean "going without food." The word breakfast originates from the idea when you eat in the morning after having no food since the night before, you are "breaking the overnight fast."

You may have heard the saying, "Breakfast is the most important meal of the day." Here are some reasons why it is true:

- Breakfast gives you energy. By eating a healthy breakfast in the morning, it is like you are filling up your gas tank. Breakfast gives you the energy you need to get your day started on the right foot.
- Breakfast puts you ahead in the nutrition game. Many of the nutrients your body needs each day – like carbohydrates, protein, fat, vitamins, and minerals – are contained in foods that are part of a healthy breakfast. If you skip breakfast, you are limiting the chances you have to get these nutrients during the rest of the day.
- Breakfast reduces your morning hunger. If you eat a healthy breakfast each day, you won't be starting off your day feeling hungry. Although this seems pretty obvious, it makes you less likely to want to eat later on in the morning or during the rest of your day when your food choices might be limited to foods that aren't very healthy – that is, snacks that are light on nutrition and heavy on calories.
- Breakfast can help you to concentrate and focus better. Your brain needs energy to be able to do its job of thinking, processing information, remembering and concentrating. If you eat a healthy breakfast, you are giving your brain the energy it needs to do these things. This might help you to concentrate better and focus more easily on what you're doing. Additionally, you will probably be less distracted by those feelings of hunger you get later on if you skip breakfast.

So, if there are all these great reasons to eat breakfast, then why is it the one meal of the day that most people skip?

The section below looks at some common roadblocks to eating breakfast along with some solutions.

ROADBLOCK # 1 – "I don't have time for breakfast."

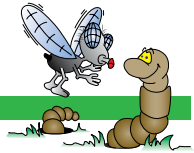
SOLUTION

As far as breakfast is concerned – it's not a matter of finding the time but instead, it's a matter of making the time – 10- 15 minutes or less, that's all. The usual breakfast meals – cereal, toast, fruit, etc., – are easy to make and quick to eat. Many breakfast foods can be prepared quickly and "on the run." For example, a low-fat granola bar, cup of milk and a piece of fruit takes about 30 seconds to get together and can be eaten as you walk out the door.

ROADBLOCK # 2 – "I'm not hungry in the morning."

SOLUTION

Eating even a small breakfast may actually help to settle your stomach. Try just eating a small amount at first and see if you can get used to it – chances are you'll feel better for it. Once you're more used to it, you will probably look forward to eating breakfast. But even if you only eat a small breakfast – a piece of fruit and toast, for example – make sure you make a healthy choice.



ROADBLOCK # 3 – "I don't like breakfast foods."

SOLUTION

Who says you have to have only breakfast foods at breakfast? Be creative! Use your imagination. Try some other foods for breakfast – maybe some soup or some leftovers or a sandwich – tuna, tomato, peanut butter and jam, grilled cheese, or whatever. Just remember to make a healthy choice.

ROADBLOCK # 4 - "But if my parents don't eat breakfast, why should I?"

SOLUTION

Remember that part of healthy eating and creating a foundation of healthy habits is learning to take responsibility for your own choices. This could mean that you have to make a choice to do the healthy and best thing for you – eating breakfast – regardless of whether your parents choose to eat it. You need to be the leader here and set the example.

So, what makes a good breakfast?

Virtually, any choice that follows the Foundation Strategies can be a part of a good breakfast. Below, you will see a list of the most common breakfast – type foods. However, you can be creative and use your imagination to come up with other breakfast items – just remember to keep it healthy. Keep in mind that breakfast should involve a healthy choice from at least three of the four basic food groups shown below:

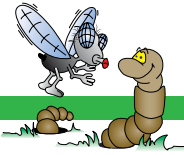
- Grains, bread, cereals
- Fruit
- Milk/other alternatives
- Meat/other alternatives (optional)

Grains, Breads, Cereals

- Cold (or hot) cereal - choose one made with whole grains – (for example, whole wheat, bran, oats). Some choices could be Shreddies®, Shredded Wheat® (Spoon Size® or Regular), Bran Flakes®, Corn Flakes®, Cheerios®, or a multi-grain cereal. Avoid, or choose less often, cereals that are coated with or have a lot of added sugar.
- Toast - choose whole grain bread (for example, whole wheat, oat, bran, rye) – it should say "whole" grain in the list of ingredients. Bagels and other bread products are good choices, too, as long as they are whole grain.
- Other choices in this group are pancakes and waffles – choose only whole grain varieties of these foods as often as possible. Go easy on the syrup.

Toast and/or cereal from whole grains provide a number of nutrients including carbohydrates (for energy), protein, vitamins (esp. B vitamins), and minerals (such as iron). These types of foods make healthy breakfast choices. But try combining them with other foods outlined below.

- Milk/Yogurt – Choose milk or yogurt that is "low in fat" – skim, 1%, 2% (avoid whole or homogenized) – look for the words low fat on the yogurt container. Choose these foods because of the calcium they contain.
- Fruit
 - Fruit juice - Juice can be frozen, bottled or fresh – as long as it is 100% juice and does not have added sugar. It should be unsweetened. Avoid fruit "drinks" as these are often high in sugar and low in nutrition. Read the labels and choose carefully. Limit your intake of juice to one small glass per day.
 - Fresh fruit – Many varieties - oranges, bananas, pineapples, berries, melon – whatever you like. Add to cereal or eat separately.



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These foods are great sources of carbohydrates, vitamins and some minerals.

- Meat/Alternatives – The most common breakfast foods from this group are peanut butter and eggs.
- Eggs – Eggs are a good source of protein, vitamins, and minerals. Prepare them scrambled, boiled, or poached. Avoid frying. One serving is approximately one to two eggs, depending on size.
- Peanut Butter – Choose lower-fat (fat-reduced) peanut butter. One serving is usually about one tablespoon.

Choose health - Eat breakfast every day.