

Better Breakfasts

Based on modern science (and the wisdom of mothers throughout the ages), breakfast is a very important meal. Research shows breaking an overnight fast with a balanced meal can make a major difference in overall health and well-being, especially 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 long. Here's how to get your kids started on the nutrition fast track to a high-energy, health-smart day.

Start With Some Powerful Protein

Protein, a missing component in many morning meals, helps children go strong and stay focused until lunch. Go lean with protein choices: a slice or two of Canadian bacon, an egg, a slice of deli meat or cheese, a container of low-fat yogurt or peanut butter on toast. Think outside of the breakfast box: Microwave a quesadilla on a wheat tortilla with black beans or enjoy a tofu scramble with chopped vegetables and grated mozzarella cheese.

Add in Nutrient-Rich Whole Grains

A high-octane carbohydrate will help energize both kids' bodies and brains. Whole grains provide an extra nutrition punch. They have more fiber and nutrients, plus they tend to digest more slowly for longer lasting energy. Serve kids whole-grain cereals like oatmeal. Or try whole-grain breads, muffins, waffles, pancakes or rolls to help the family rise, shine and get ready for a busy day.

Get Fresh with Fruits (and Vegetables)

Breakfast is a perfect time to enjoy the produce children need for optimal health. Go with fresh fruit: bananas, kiwi, pears, apples, mangoes, melon, grapefruit or whatever's in season. Canned options (pineapple or mandarin oranges) and frozen fruits (blueberries and strawberries) are great in yogurt parfaits. How about chopped vegetables in an omelet or a refreshing glass of vegetable juice?

Make It Routine

Need some easy ways to beat the breakfast rush hour? Here are three ways to help fit a breakfast bonanza into your family's morning routine:

- **Get Organized the Night Before:** Make a breakfast plan as you clean up from dinner. Set the table with bowls and spoons for cereal. Get out a pan for pancakes or a blender for smoothies. Prepare muffin or waffle mix so it's all ready to cook in the morning.
- **Keep Breakfast Simple:** On busy days, get the family going with something as quick as a bowl of whole-grain cereal with a banana or a slice of leftover pizza with orange juice.
- **Pack Your Breakfast To Go:** If there's no time to eat at home, plan a nutritious option to eat in the car or bus. Busy teens can grab a banana, a bag of trail mix and a carton of milk. Check out the breakfast options available at your children's school too.