

10 Reasons Breakfast Is A MUST

By Susan Burke MS, RD, LD/N, CDE
Vice President of Nutrition Services

October 5, 2004

Is it an old wives' tale, or is breakfast really the most important meal of the day? Perhaps your mom always made you eat hot lumpy cereal in the morning, so as soon as you escaped her clutches, you developed the coffee and cigarette habit in college, and ever since then breakfast was a bagel... at lunchtime.

You've realized your adolescence ended (about 10 years ago!) and now it's time for a change. You've stopped that smoking thing... it was smelly and made your teeth yellow anyway. But your pants are too tight, you can't climb a set of stairs without huffing and puffing and you feel much older than your years.

At eDiets, we offer 19 different meal plans to suit different lifestyles and food preferences. Low carb, low fat, or vegetarian... if you've made up your mind to improve your waistline and your health, you'll find the program just for you.

Back to breakfast... yes it's true, breakfast can make or break a diet, because breakfast helps set the tone for the rest of the day. If you're one of those people who thinks skipping breakfast is a good way to lose weight... think again. Here are the top reasons why you should definitely eat breakfast, every day:

1. Break the fast. Ever think of what "breakfast" means? Your body responds to not eating for hours and hours by slowing down its metabolic rate. By eating breakfast, you wake up your metabolism and get your engine humming, burning those calories you need to burn to lose weight.
2. Eat more, weigh less. Researchers have repeatedly shown that people who eat breakfast have a better chance of losing weight, and keeping it off. When you skip meals, you're so hungry by lunchtime you eat the entire cow! The National Weight Control Registry shows that among those who've lost 30 or more pounds and have kept it off more than a year, 90 percent report eating breakfast most days of the week.
3. Are you interested in doing better at work and school? Don't be a bed head... breakfast helps wake you up. Studies show that people who eat breakfast are more alert and do better on tests than people who skip breakfast. The USDA's Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion Symposium titled Breakfast and Learning in Children, April, 1999, cites a "myriad" of studies that show eating breakfast helps "improve memory and positively affects the tasks that require the retention of new information.

Conversely, a hungry child can be apathetic, disinterested, and irritable when confronted with difficult tasks. Breakfast is the key." No doubt adults need breakfast as much as kids do.

4. Breakfast is your chance to eat the foods you may not eat the rest of the day. You can have whole-grain cereal and berries with nonfat milk -- here is your fiber, folic acid and calcium in one easy-to-grab bowl. Low-carbers need to go very easy on grains, so opt for the highest-fiber brand you can find. However, why not indulge instead in the typical eggs and bacon breakfast most other eating plans frown upon?

5. Skipping breakfast makes you grouchy. Studies show that people who eat breakfast tend to be in better moods (when I'm hungry -- watch out!). Breakfast gets you started on the right track for the day. If you start out with a healthy breakfast, then you set the mood for lunch. You're more likely to choose something reasonable for lunch if you've paid some attention to your breakfast choices.

6. Cancel the Danish or sugared donut first thing in the morning -- they cause a blood sugar dip a couple of hours later. You'll be desperate for something to perk you up, and are more likely to grab another high-sugar refined carb, for a quick sugar rush.

7. Breakfast makes your machine run better. Get yourself on a schedule with a healthy breakfast, and you're ready to take on the world.

8. If you're a parent, set a good example. By skipping breakfast, your kids will think it's not important. Breakfast doesn't have to be a big affair, but don't wimp out... make it a habit, and your kids will be way ahead of the game too.

9. Don't eat dessert for breakfast. If you think a glazed donut or a breakfast bar with 30 grams of sugar are breakfast items, then think again. Donuts are fried lumps of sugared dough, and many breakfast bars should be labeled "candy bars" instead.

10. One more word about labels... if it says, "Nutritious," it doesn't necessarily mean it's healthy. Cereal manufacturers are experts in marketing, using words that send a message of health, but unless you read the labels, eat at your own risk. Kids' cereals often have more sugar than candy. Protect your kids from getting hooked on these cereals... they'll get used to all the sugar, and will want only pre-sweetened cereals.

Whether you're following the Atkins' controlled carb program, or maybe you're veggin' out with grains and legumes... breakfast is one meal you don't want to miss.