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Power Up with Breakfast



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Kids who fuel up in the morning focus and concentrate better in the classroom and perform better on math, reading and standardized tests. They also have fewer behavior problems and are less likely to be tardy. Eating breakfast also can help children maintain a healthy weight. Unfortunately, studies show many children don't eat breakfast every day.

A high-octane carbohydrate source energizes the body and brain for a busy day with fiber and nutrients. Think whole-grain cereal (hot or cold), bread, tortillas, muffins, waffles or even leftover rice or pasta. Protein often is a missing link in morning meals and it's needed to go strong until lunch. Think a slice of Canadian bacon, an egg, a slice of lean deli meat or low-fat cheese, a container of low-fat yogurt, a scoop of low-fat cottage cheese, a cup of milk or a handful of nuts.

Breakfast is a perfect time to enjoy fruits and vegetables children need for optimal health. Try fresh seasonal fruit alone or in cereal, add frozen fruits to yogurt or toss chopped vegetables into an omelet.

Healthy Breakfasts for Busy Mornings

Get the morning nutrition you need with these quick breakfast ideas.

- **Instant oatmeal:** Make it with fat-free or low-fat milk instead of water. Toss in raisins or dried cranberries and chopped walnuts. Or mix in $\frac{1}{4}$ cup unsweetened applesauce and sprinkle with apple pie spice or cinnamon.
- **Yogurt parfait:** Layer fat-free or low-fat plain yogurt with your crunchy cereal and blueberries.
- **Breakfast smoothie:** Blend low-fat milk, frozen strawberries and a banana.
- **Toaster waffle:** Toast and top with nut butter and apple slices.
- **Pita egg sandwich:** Stuff a whole-wheat pita with a sliced, hard-cooked egg and low-fat shredded cheese.
- **Banana roll-up:** Spread peanut butter on a whole-wheat tortilla. Add a peeled, whole banana and roll it up.
- **Bagel and veggies:** Spread hummus on a whole-grain toasted bagel. Top with sliced cucumbers and tomatoes.
- **English muffin:** Add lean ham and low-fat Swiss cheese to a toasted whole-grain English muffin.

If your taste buds just don't crave breakfast foods, try these:

- Deli turkey, a slice of low-fat cheese and lettuce wrapped in a tortilla.
- Leftover quinoa or brown rice mixed with low-fat yogurt, dried fruit and nuts. Sprinkle with cinnamon.

Get Yourself Prepped

While breakfast might seem like a hurdle in your busy morning, nutritious food doesn't need to take extra time to prepare. Try the following tips:

- **Get organized the night before.** Get out a pan for pancakes or a blender for smoothies. Prepare muffin or waffle mix so it's ready to cook in the morning. Set out a few boxes of whole-grain cereal for kids to choose — all they'll have to do in the morning is add milk.
- **Set the alarm 10 minutes earlier.** Hectic mornings can make it difficult for kids (and parents) to find time for breakfast. Waking up just a few minutes earlier provides time to squeeze in a quick morning meal.
- **Pack your breakfast to go.** If there's no time to eat at home, plan a nutritious option to eat on the bus or when you arrive at work. Busy teens can grab a banana, a bag of trail mix and a carton of milk. Don't forget to see if your school offers a breakfast program.
- **Help make sure your kids have an appetite.** Many kids aren't hungry for breakfast because they snack too much at night. Try offering lighter snacks in the evening and you might be surprised how much hungrier they are in the morning. In addition, try having your children dress first and eat second. Kids are more likely to feel hungry once they have a chance to wake up.
- **Be a positive role model.** Children will mimic their parents' behavior, so make it a habit to sit down and eat a nutritious breakfast with your kids every morning.

Whatever your morning routine, remember that breakfast is an important meal for the family, and doesn't have to be very time-consuming. When you eat well in the morning, you and your family will be on the nutrition fast track for a high-energy day. Surprise them with Strawberry Banana Cereal — try the recipe below!

Strawberry Banana Cereal

Ingredients

¾ cup wheat and barley nugget cereal
¼ cup 100-percent bran cereal
2 teaspoons toasted sunflower seeds
2 teaspoons toasted almonds, sliced
1 tablespoon raisins
½ cup bananas, sliced
1 cup strawberries, sliced
1 cup raspberry or strawberry flavored low-fat yogurt

Directions

1. The night before, mix the wheat and barley nugget cereal, bran cereal, sunflower seeds, almonds, and raisins in a medium bowl and cover tightly.
2. In the morning, add bananas and half of the strawberries.
3. Gently stir in the yogurt and divide between two bowls.
4. Scatter the remaining strawberries over the top and enjoy!