

Breakfast

Breakfast is often said to be the most important meal of the day. It might surprise you to hear that this isn't strictly accurate, as every main meal is as important as each other, and skipping meals, whether that's breakfast, lunch or evening meal, isn't advised.

Eating a healthy, balanced breakfast every day will give you the best possible start, as it will give you the energy you need for your morning activities, whether at work, school, home or out and about. It can make a vital contribution to the overall nutritional quality of your daily food intake.

A balanced, healthy breakfast provides essential nutrients that your body needs for energy, health and vitality. This includes carbohydrate, protein, fat, fibre, vitamins and key minerals, such as calcium and iron.

Research has shown that people who eat breakfast have more balanced diets than those who skip it, are less likely to be overweight, lose weight more successfully if overweight, and have a reduced risk of some diseases, including cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes.

Eating breakfast can also help to improve your mental performance, concentration and mood – 3 great reasons to eat something in the morning!

However, despite all of these benefits it's estimated that up to one third of us regularly skip breakfast, which is often put down to time pressures in the morning. In my experience, with a little planning, you can find a breakfast choice that suits your lifestyle. Important information given that following a regular eating pattern has been shown to improve blood glucose (sugar) control, reduce the likelihood of weight gain and curb hunger pangs.

Missing breakfast can increase your feelings of hunger later in the day. This often results in snacking on less healthy foods which are often high in calories, fat and sugar, and much lower in vitamins and minerals than provided by traditional breakfast options.

If you're one of those people who can't face eating first thing, try to eat within two hours of getting up. Most people I've worked with about this over the years describe feeling sick when they try to eat breakfast. For most who work to overcome this the nausea usually passes after a few weeks; meaning they get their day off to a flying start, and soon feel the benefit of including breakfast.

So my advice is..... Start with something small for breakfast then increase the quantity gradually over a few weeks. For example, you could start with something you already know you enjoy eating; a small pot of yoghurt, or half a slice of toast, or a piece of fruit. Stick with that volume until you're tolerating that easily; then increase that volume further, stick with that until you're tolerating this increased volume easily. Then, keep increasing the volume until you're able to easily manage those described in the suggestions below.

So, what makes a healthy breakfast?

Your breakfast should provide around 20 – 25% of your daily calorie intake, and it's important that it's balanced and healthy.

Ideally, for an excellent start to the day, your breakfast will include 3 of the main food group's; that's starchy carbohydrate, dairy/dairy alternatives, and fruit and/or vegetables:

- **Starchy Carbohydrates**

- Sadly, this food group is often inappropriately demonised, accused of causing all sorts of ill-health and weight gain. For the majority this food group doesn't bring about ill health or weight gain. When eaten in appropriate serving sizes and as part of a balanced diet this food group will not cause weight gain.
- Great breakfast options include wholemeal breads/rolls, porridge, wholegrain breakfast cereals and rice for kedgeree as they provide energy, B vitamins, some iron and fibre.
- Breakfast cereals are quick and easy to prepare, many of which are fortified with vitamins, iron and calcium that contribute to your daily nutritional requirements. However, be mindful that some breakfast cereals contain added sugar and salt, so check the labels to find products you like that are low in sugar and salt. Low fat options usually include porridge, whole-wheat breakfast cereals, wholemeal bread and rolls, wholemeal English muffins, scones, malt loaf, fruit bread, currant buns and bagels. These all provide good sources of energy that will help kick start your metabolism. Choosing the wholegrain varieties described will also help improve your fibre intake which is important for bowel health and can keep you feeling fuller for longer.

- **Fruit and vegetables**

- These are good sources of vitamins, minerals and fibre. So, including some fruit with your breakfast is the perfect time to get on track to meeting your 5-a-day. Options you may want to consider include:
 - Chopped fresh fruit, like a banana, some berries or fruit salad
 - Dried fruit, like sultanas, cranberries or apricots
 - Stewed or canned fruit (in fruit juice not syrup)
- You could also have a small glass (150ml) of pure fruit juice or fruit smoothie.
- You could include vegetables on those days when you have a bit more time on your hands. Mushrooms, baked beans or canned tomatoes are delicious on toast.

- **Milk, dairy and dairy alternative foods**
 - These are good sources of protein, calcium and B vitamins. Calcium is vital for strong, healthy bones and teeth throughout your life. A glass of milk, a small pot of yoghurt or a $\frac{1}{3}$ measuring cup of grated cheese can give you around one third of your daily calcium needs.
 - It can be very difficult to meet your daily calcium needs when this food group is eliminated.
 - If you use dairy alternatives such as soya, oat, coconut, almond or rice milks, choose products that are unsweetened and fortified with calcium.

- **Meat, fish, eggs, beans and other non-dairy sources of protein**
 - These foods provide your body with protein, iron, vitamins and minerals.
 - These types of protein rich foods are not essential at breakfast, but they can add variety.
 - Try not to have meat at breakfast every day, especially sausages and bacon as they're high in saturated fat so try to limit your intake of them to a maximum of 1 – 2 times each week. Boiled or scrambled eggs, beans and kippers are healthier options. Choose cooking methods such as grilling or poaching.

- **Foods and drinks high in fat and sugar**
 - Try to limit your intake of these foods as they're high in calories and usually low in vitamins and minerals.
 - Keep pastries and croissants as an occasional treat, rather than an everyday eat, as they're high in fat and calories.
 - Avoid fizzy drinks, biscuits and crisps as these are high in fat and sugar and you're sure to feel hungry again sooner than you think.

- **Remember to include fluid.**
 - Try to include some water with your breakfast as this will get your hydration levels off to a good start.
 - Try to avoid tea and coffee with main meals as they reduce your body's ability to absorb the vitally important iron from your food.
 - Being well hydrated is important for good concentration.

On the following pages you'll find some breakfast cereal options that contain around 400kcal each. They all include 2 servings of fruit; 1 x fruit and 1 x glass of fruit juice / smoothie, 1 x serving of starchy carbohydrate and 1 x serving of dairy.

Please note that the images used are stock images from the internet so may not accurately reflect the serving sizes described below.

I've included cow's milk dairy options, however do feel free to switch the suggested option with your preferred dairy alternative. Please be mindful that this will alter the calorie content.

Breakfast cereal ideas

Also include a small 150ml glass of fruit juice or fruit smoothie with each of these options.



Bran flakes

- ✓ 1 measuring cup of bran flakes
- ✓ ½ measuring cup of milk
- ✓ 1 small banana or handful of berries



Cornflakes

- ✓ 1 measuring cup of cornflakes
- ✓ ½ measuring cup of milk
- ✓ 1 small banana or handful of berries



Fruit 'n Fibre

- ✓ 1 level measuring cup of Fruit 'n Fibre
- ✓ ½ measuring cup of milk
- ✓ 1 small banana or handful of berries



Granola and milk/ yoghurt

- ✓ ½ cup of low sugar granola
- ✓ ½ measuring cup milk
- ✓ 1 small piece of fruit



Muesli and milk/ yoghurt

- ✓ ½ cup of muesli
- ✓ ½ measuring cup of milk or 125ml natural yoghurt
- ✓ 1 small piece of fruit

Breakfast cereal ideas



Porridge

- ✓ ½ measuring cup of porridge
- ✓ 1 measuring cup milk
- ✓ 1 teaspoon stevia
- ✓ 1 x small banana or handful of berries



Porridge (Overnight oats)

- ✓ ½ measuring cup of porridge oats
 - ✓ ½ measuring cup of milk
 - ✓ ½ cup diced apple
 - ✓ 1 teaspoon stevia graduals
 - ✓ 1/8 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- Mix all of the ingredients together in a container and leave to soak in the fridge overnight



Shreddies

- ✓ 1 cup Shreddies
- ✓ ½ measuring cup of milk
- ✓ 1 small banana or handful of berries



Wheat pillows

- ✓ 2 wheat pillows
- ✓ ½ measuring cup of milk
- ✓ 1 small banana or handful of berries



Whole-wheat hoops

- ✓ 1 measuring cup of whole-wheat hoops
- ✓ ½ measuring cup of milk
- ✓ 1 small banana or handful of berries