



## **BREAKFAST MATTERS!**

More than any other meal, breakfast is an investment in good health. Eating in the morning helps you stay focused and energized through busy days. Breakfast increases the likelihood of meeting recommended daily doses for essential vitamins and minerals that help prevent disease. And recent research makes the idea of a morning meal even more appetizing. A study in the *Journal of the American Dietetic Association* found that individuals who eat breakfast are less likely to be overweight—and more likely to exercise—than non-breakfast eaters.

Preparing a healthful breakfast is easier than you might think, no matter how busy your schedule. Just aim to incorporate the following five elements of better breakfasts into your morning meal.

### **1. Eat Mindfully**

Sit to eat—even for five minutes—and try to focus only on enjoying your meal, savoring the flavors and aromas. "If you're eating while rushing around—getting yourself or your kids ready for the day—you won't really feel like you've had a meal," says Lisa R. Young, Ph.D., R.D., adjunct assistant professor of nutrition, food studies, and public health at New York University and author of *The Portion Teller*. When you get to the office and see doughnuts, you'll feel like you've already eaten.

### **2. Include Lean Protein**

A scone or bagel may be tempting, but if you eat only refined carbohydrates, you'll likely be hungry again in two hours, says Beth Casey Gold, R.D., clinical coordinator for the Behavioral Weight Management Program at the University of Vermont in Burlington.

Include protein in your morning meal: It is digested at a slower rate than carbohydrates, which keeps blood sugar levels steady—and helps you feel satisfied longer. Good choices include skim milk (on cereal or in a latte or cappuccino), low-fat yogurt, soy or turkey sausage, low-fat cheese, or eggs (hard-boiled, poached, or scrambled in nonfat spray).

### **3. Fill Up with Fiber**

For guaranteed breakfast satisfaction, pair lean protein with a serving of fiber-rich carbohydrates. Go for whole-grain breads and cereals that provide at least four grams of fiber per serving.

Insoluble fiber from whole grains is largely indigestible and takes up space in the stomach, helping you feel full. Soluble fiber—also found in grains and fruit—helps lower cholesterol. These quality carbohydrates provide a long-lasting source of energy, so you continue to feel fueled several hours after eating. According to research published in the *International Journal of Food Science and Nutrition*, the energy supplied by a breakfast high in fiber-rich carbohydrates versus one that is high-fat may result in better mental focus during morning hours.

#### **4. Front-Load Your Day with Nutrients**

Breakfast offers an excellent opportunity to increase your daily vitamin and mineral intake. A recent study in the Journal of the American Dietetic Association reported that people who ate breakfast had higher overall intakes of vitamin B6, folic acid, vitamin C, calcium, magnesium, iron, potassium, and fiber than people who skipped their morning meal. Those nutrients help protect against a variety of diseases, ranging from heart disease to osteoporosis.

#### **5. Savor Your Favorite Tastes**

"If you don't like what you're eating, you won't stick with it," Phelan says. If your choices aren't the most nutritious, small tweaks can make them more healthful. For example, if you have a sweet tooth in the morning, try a piece of nutty whole-grain bread spread with a tablespoon each of almond butter (it's slightly sweeter than peanut butter) and fruit preserves instead of eating foods that offer sweetness but little nutritional benefit, like doughnuts or muffins. If you enjoy egg dishes but don't have time to prepare your favorite before work, try microwaving an egg while toasting two slices whole wheat or rye (whole-grain) bread. Add a slice of low-fat cheese for a healthful breakfast sandwich that's ready in minutes. And don't overlook leftovers. If you feel like cold pizza (which contains antioxidant-filled tomato sauce, calcium-rich cheese, and lots of veggies), have it. It's a good breakfast that's better than no breakfast at all. By Nicci Micco, CookingLight Magazine